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Nato orders Kosovo peace deal

AS THE slaughter continues in Kosovo, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, is to travel to Yugoslavia today to deliver what amounts to an order from the great powers to President Slobodan Milosevic and ethnic Albanian leaders to sit down together and wrap up a peace deal within three weeks.

Hours after 25 Albanians were killed by Yugoslav security forces in a dawn raid on a village south of the capital, Pristina, the six-nation Contact Group yesterday issued its plan to end a year of carnage. More than 2,000 people have died and

BY RUPERT CORNWELL

300,000 have lost their homes threatening conflagration across the southern Balkans.

The proposals, giving a broad measure of autonomy for Kosovo, are expected to be reinforced by a specific final warning from Nato to Mr Milosevic that he faces air strikes unless he meets the demands for Yugoslav troops to pull back, and war crimes prosecutors to be allowed to investigate the 15 January massacre at Racak.

The scheme announced by the foreign ministers of Britain,

the US, France, Germany, Italy and Russia is simple and stark - a measure of how the great powers have lost patience with a conflict that has stretched Nato's credibility as a peacekeeper, and threatens to create a humanitarian disaster if fighting resumes in the spring.

"We expect agreement in a week," Mr Cook stated flatly, a sentiment backed by Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State. "We have sent the parrot an unmistakable message," she said. "Get serious, showing up is not enough."

But last night it was not

even clear they would show up, let alone agree a deal that satisfies neither side.

The initial reaction from both Belgrade and the insurgents of the Kosovo Liberation Army was frosty. The latter said they would not engage in talks until a ceasefire was in place, and then only about full independence.

The Yugoslav government insisted no ceasefire was possible in a war against "terrorists". Making no mention of the Contact Group proposal, it called for direct talks between the communities in the

province, 90 per cent of whose population is Albanian.

In a blunt statement after a two-hour meeting in London yesterday, the Contact Group said it was "summoning representatives of the Yugoslav and Serbian governments and of the Kosovo ethnic Albanians" to a conference starting by 6 February at Rambouillet, near Paris, to be co-chaired by Mr Cook and his French opposite number, Hubert Vedrine. Helped by mediators, they have a week to reach basic agreement, and a week thereafter to settle the details. If this ambitious timetable

holds, a deal will be in place by 20 February.

In fact, despite the lack of enthusiasm in both Pristina and Belgrade, Contact Group officials are reasonably confident both the Yugoslav/Serb side and the ethnic Albanian political leadership under Ibrahim Rugova will attend. The big problem is the KLA, bitter rivals of Dr Rugova and largely beyond the reach of allied threats.

"We can bomb the Serbs," one senior Nato diplomat said, "but how do we bomb the KLA?" Even so, he insisted, if the others went to Rambouillet,

the conference would go ahead with or without the KLA.

As the American envoy Christopher Hill and his EU counterpart, Wolfgang Petritsch, continued their efforts to bring the ethnic Albanians together, Nato was finalising plans to deploy tens of thousands of Allied troops to police a peace deal.

Their task would be to maintain order within Kosovo and, almost certainly, seal the province's borders with Albania and Macedonia.

Germany yesterday joined Britain and France in promising ground troops, and the US

too is bracing itself for something it once vowed it would never do. The administration was "watching matters carefully" and would consult Congress before any decision, was all Ms Albright would say.

The ultimate quandary for the Allies, however, will be if the talks either do not start or if they end in failure. The official line is ground troops would never be used in those circumstances.

But if the slaughter worsened, pressure on Nato to "do something" might become irresistible.

Troops stand by, page 13

Collins is borne past the graffiti of hate to his grave

A CHORD WAS struck with more than one person at the funeral of Eamon Collins yesterday when a young woman read from the Bible about a time to keep silent, a time to speak, a time to be born, a time to die.

The lines from Ecclesiastes helped to explain why the funeral was taking place: ex-IRA man Collins had, for his own complex reasons, decided simply to ignore the republican rule that a man in his position should keep silent.

Some 50 people, silent, downcast, some with red-rimmed eyes, followed his coffin from his home in Barcroft Park to St Catherine's church.

Barcroft Park is a tough republican area of the town of Newry in Co Down, a tight-knit hilly estate: few gathered to watch the funeral procession, and those who did looked on impassively.

The splashes of colour on yesterday's grey day came

BY DAVID MCKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

mostly from the plentiful republican paraphernalia. As the mourners shuffled down the hill they passed the graffiti that had threatened Eamon Collins, and predicted his death.

He used to go out with a paintbrush and paint over the slogans or alter them: he changed one which labelled him "RUC Taut" to "RUC out".

But he could not wipe out the hatred of those who regarded him as a traitor to the republican cause, or those who carried a personal grudge against him.

Thus it was that the body inside the coffin was not just dead but mutilated, stabbed and battered in an attack which, as one police officer graphically put it, could have been carried out by primitive savagery.

The sad little procession, which seemed to be moving



The grieving family of murdered Eamon Collins (from left), his son Lorcan, daughter Sorcha, wife Bernie, daughter Aoife and son Tiarnach

Justin Kernoghan

family, walked past a tricolour poster a past glorying an IRA man with a machine-gun, and past an elaborate granite monument erected in memory of locals "who were part of Ireland's struggle for freedom".

Further down, they walked slowly past small knots of people who, wiser and more discreet than Eamon Collins, plainly knew the value of silence.

They said little or nothing

even to each other, giving the impression that they were simply observing rather than being in the business of paying their respects to the dead.

But there was a surprisingly large representation inside the church, perhaps 200 people listening to Father Peter McPartland chide politicians who did not wish to know Eamon Collins when he was alive but who now "use his death to suit themselves".

Father McParland produced a wreath from his four children - "In loving memory of Daddy from Lorcan, Aoife, Sorcha and Tiarnach" - a stark and sad reminder that he was also somebody's father, somebody's husband, and some mother's son.

Patricia McParland produced no extravagant anathema against the killers, contenting himself with remarking in general terms that they had all seen too much of war, hatred and injustice, and expressing the hope that this pointless killing would be the last.

Then, in a local graveyard, they buried Collins, the man who helped the IRA to kill so many people, who recanted, who refused to obey the re-

publican rules, and who paid the price with his life. His tortured death is only the latest in the toll of more than 3,600 victims of the Troubles.

There, at the graveside, was a wreath from his four children - "In loving memory of Daddy from Lorcan, Aoife, Sorcha and Tiarnach" - a stark and sad reminder that he was also somebody's father, somebody's husband, and some mother's son.

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Woodward drama at end as Eappens settle

BY DAVID USBORNE
in New York

THE LONG-AWAITED civil trial in the Louise Woodward murder case was averted at the eleventh hour last night after the former au pair and the parents of Matthew Eappen, the toddler who died almost exactly two years ago while in her care, reached a surprise out-of-court settlement.

The deal, which should mean the final lowering of the curtain on the legal drama that propelled the Woodward name onto front pages worldwide, was unveiled in Boston by lawyers for Sunil and Deborah Eappen. It aims to bar Ms Woodward from profiting from her notoriety by selling her story.

The civil trial, which would have been held with a jury but

taken to hospital with head trauma. The Eappens filed their wrongful death lawsuit in June last year, one day after the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court upheld the manslaughter conviction and allowed Woodward to return to Britain. Raised in Elton, Cheshire, she is now studying law at a university in London.

A lawyer for the Eappens, Frederic Ellis, said the settlement would ensure that Woodward "does not profit from the killing of their 8-month-old baby". There was no information on whether any money will change hands between Woodward and the Eappens.

In a statement, the lawyer said that "enforcement action" would be taken in the event that

Woodward violates the agreement and that any profits she makes would be seized and donated to the Matile Eappen Foundation, a charity established by the Eappens.

Mr Ellis said he was confident that any breach of the agreement could be challenged through the British courts. "It's a contract, and with any contract there's always a chance it won't be honoured," he said. "If she doesn't honour it, we will bring another action and that action would have to be in England".

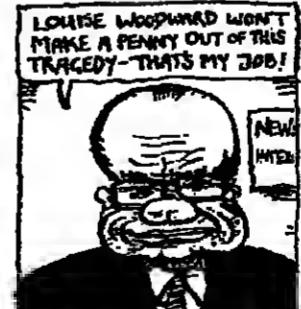
Paul Barrow, the lawyer for Woodward, left open the possibility that his client could still tell her story. He said, however, that any proceeds would be given to the charity of her

choice, which would be Unicef. "Louise has always maintained that she has no intention to profit from her story, and Louise confirmed to maintain her innocence," he said last night.

The Daily Mail drew criticism when it paid for an interview with Woodward's parents, Susan and Gary, conducted between the two verdicts in the criminal trial. The sum was reported to be £40,000. Last December, the Press Complaints Commission cleared the newspaper of wrongdoing.

Last night Mr Woodward said his daughter's ordeal would always affect the family. "It will never leave us. We can try, we've been through - and everybody involved in this has been through - an awful lot," he said. "It will never leave us but we've got to try and move on."

Tim



LOUISE WOODWARD WON'T MAKE A PENNY OUT OF THE TRAGEDY - THAT'S MY JOB!

NEW YORK TIMES

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THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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'Deliberately killing people in front of their families; torturing and mutilating victims before shooting them ... for such a task, you need people who enjoy their work.'

Fintan O'Toole on the IRA

THE BEST-WRITTEN SUNDAY PAPER IN BRITAIN, FEATURING DAVID THOMSON, JEREMY CLARKE, WALLACE ARNOLD, PETER YORK, CRISTINA ODONE, JOAN SMITH, GILBERT ADAIR, MICHAEL BYWATER, DEAR ANNIE, CAPTAIN MOONLIGHT, FELIPE FERNANDEZ-ARMESTO AND ALAN WATKINS

Lords set to defeat rape evidence Bill

GOVERNMENT MOVES to ban rape defendants from cross-examining their accusers are facing defeat in the House of Lords next week following an extraordinary intervention by the country's most senior sitting judge.

The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham of Cornhill, yesterday laid down an amendment to the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Bill that would allow rape victims to be questioned by defendants. This would occur only if judges deemed it necessary for a fair trial.

A further amendment challenges the Bill's ban on barristers raising a woman's sexual history in a rape case, another element about which Lord Bingham is known to have "serious misgivings".

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, has frequently promised better protection for rape victims in court, and is understood to want to defend the Bill in its entirety.

The measures followed two high-profile rape trials in which the defendants represented themselves and humiliated their victims in open court.

Both Ralston Edwards and Milton Brown were convicted, but women's groups and Labour MPs were appalled that judges had not intervened in their respective trials.

Yet Lord Bingham points out that since the two cases, the Court of Appeal has issued very strict guidelines to prevent the incidents happening again. No similar cases have since occurred, he asserts.

His amendment will insist that the ban on cross examination will not be enacted

BY PAUL WAUGH
Political Correspondent

unless there is evidence that the guidelines are failing.

Similarly, the second amendment will allow judges the discretion to allow questions about the rape victim's sexual history to be raised only if it is seen as crucial to the interests of a fair trial.



Lord Bingham: Know to have 'serious misgivings'

The Bill faces its first key test on Monday when the amendments are heard in the Committee Stage in the Lords, and the Government is likely to face substantial opposition from the Lords' "barrister's lobby".

Lord Bingham and his supporters hope that the amendments will force the Home Secretary to "think again" about the measures, but if there is no change, he faces a major

Lords revolt. Tory peers are understood to be prepared to back the amendments if the Government refuses to back down.

Baroness Mallalieu, who laid down the amendments together with Lord Bingham, said that they aimed to restore to the judiciary the discretion to make rulings in rape cases.

Baroness Mallalieu, a practising QC, said that the Government was legislating in response to public perception of a problem that rarely occurs in reality.

"What the Bill proposes is unnecessary because there have only been two cases where there has been a problem. It is a really drastic step to deprive somebody in all circumstances of the right to cross examine someone. Just occasionally, it helps to get at the truth."

"Similarly, I've never seen a case where a judge has allowed unnecessary questioning of an accused's sexual history. The rules are already very strict."

"I get Women Against Rape and other people phoning me up, but of course we are all against rape. It's just that we don't want to make the law so harsh that juries start acquitting because they think the defendant hasn't had a fair trial."

A spokeswoman for the Home Office pointed out that the Bill was going through the early stages of its passage through Parliament.

"The Government will listen to all the comments made, but the Bill as currently drafted reflects Government policy," she said.

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Three-year-old Elle Walsh dialled 999 when her mother, Liz, 28, got locked in a cupboard with her brother Harry, 20 months, as a game of hide and seek went wrong at their home in Yetts of Muckhart, central Scotland. Elle directed police to the home and they freed the pair

Three latest Britons arrested in Yemen 'have confessed'

THREE Britons arrested by Yemeni security forces this week in connection with alleged terrorist offences have confessed, it was reported last night.

The three, who surrendered to police on Thursday after being surrounded for two days in mountains in eastern Yemen, were captured with three other men: a French national of Algerian origin, an Algerian and a Yemeni. They will join five

BY GARY FINN

other Britons and an Algerian trial today in the southern port of Aden, after security sources said they had also admitted to charges of associating with armed groups, forming a plan to commit murder and destruction, and possessing weapons.

Last night, campaigners for the British prisoners - all Muslims from Birmingham, Luton and London - called the confessions "worthless" and said they had been elicited through torture.

Claims of torture emerged on Wednesday when the five Britons - Malik Nasser, 26, Samad Ahmed, 21, Shahid Butt, 33, Gulam Hussain, 25, from Luton, Malik Nasser, 26, and

showing bruises and cuts. Amid scenes of near-chaos, they claimed they had been sexually abused and electrocuted with cattle-prods. They have now withdrawn their confessions.

So far the Yemenis have denied access to doctors wishing to prosecute allegations.

Mohammed Leifi, a barrister, and Dr Christopher Milroy, a home office pathologist and torture specialist, were due to fly out to Yemen today to see the men, together with Mr Ahmed's father.

The Yemenis were last night reported to be blocking any further visa requests to foreign nationals. This is being interpreted as an attempt to stop the Britons' families gathering support in Yemen.

Relatives of the accused

already in Yemen yesterday wrote to the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, asking him to intervene. In their letter they repeated claims of torture.

The trial as presently set up represents a flagrant breach of

the Yemeni constitution, the code of criminal procedure and international law," they said. "In their anxiety to have a swift trial the Yemeni authorities are organising a kangaroo court, where the defendants have no chance to answer or refute the prosecution allegations."

The Foreign Office refused to comment on the letter, as it was "private correspondence", but said the torture allegations were being taken seriously. We have asked for an explanation and investigation at the highest levels," a spokesman said.

The Yemeni President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, yesterday claimed the Britons were paid \$2,000 by the London-based Muslim cleric Abu Hamza al-Misri to carry out the attacks in Yemen with promises of a further \$10,000. He repeated calls for Hamza's extradition to Yemen, a move that faces some difficulty as Britain and Yemen have no extradition treaty.

Fergal Keane, Review, page 3

Beautiful hardwood flooring.



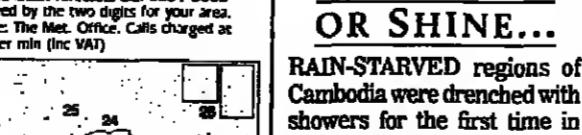
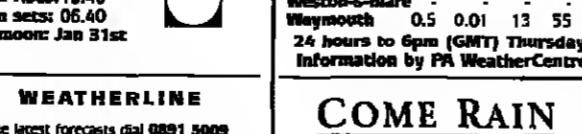
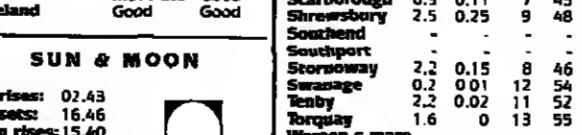
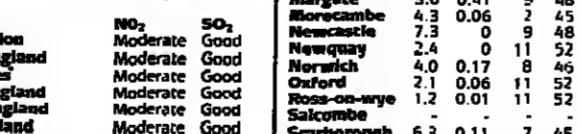
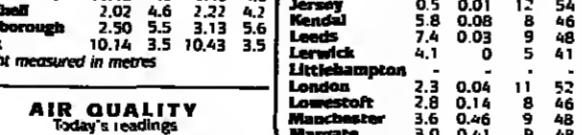
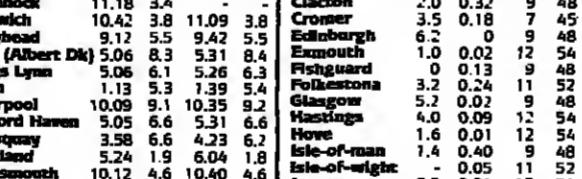
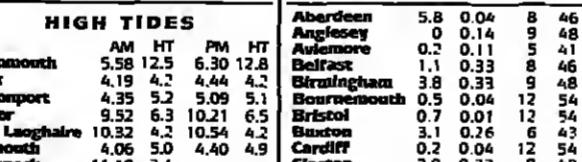
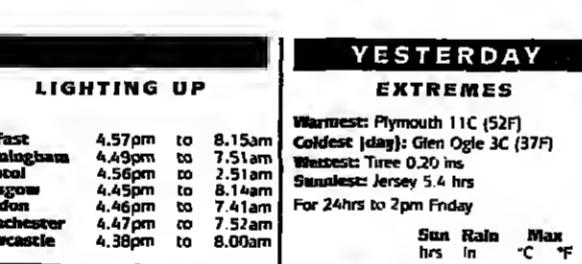
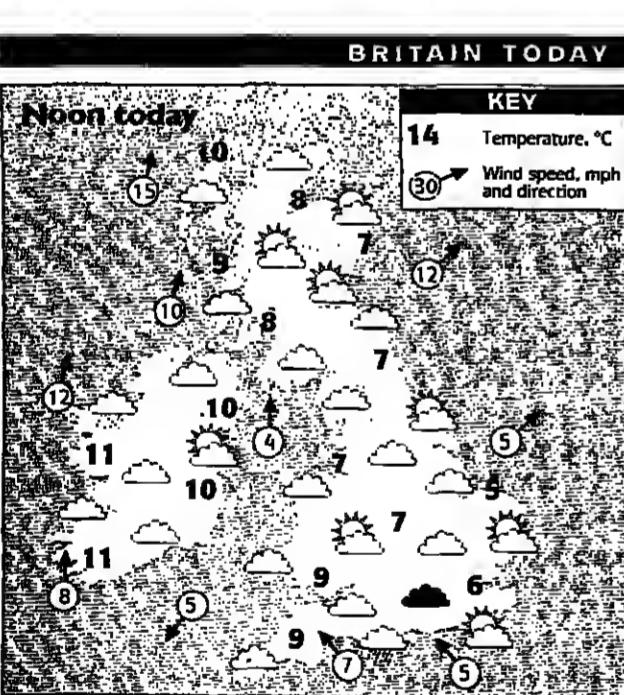
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'Can you recognise these top Tories?



(50 per cent of party chairmen can't)

They think the shadow Home Secretary is "that chap we call Stock" and that their education spokesman is a clever man with glasses. One of them has not even heard Labour is in power. No wonder William Hague has decided to censor "party activists."

Many of the 50 local Conservative chairmen questioned in an *Independent* survey this week were right behind their leader, though some were not 100 per cent sure who he was.

"I don't follow what happens in the Conservative Party and would prefer to make no comment on the whole matter," said one respondent. "Why should I be expected to know who the shadow cabinet are?"

He and his fellow chairmen were doing little to boost morale after news broke that Central Office was planning to take the blue pencil to its private polling to soften critical comment. Party officials are worried that few members know who's who in the shadow cabinet.

"Tim Yeo's job is having sex in the gutter, isn't it?" said another respondent. "Is he in

BY FRAN ABRAMS
Westminster Correspondent

They are young and have a good part to play," one chairman opined. Mrs Shephard is 59 and Mr Howard is 57.

More than three-fifths of the 50 chairmen questioned knew that Peter Lilley was deputy leader and that Francis Maude was shadow Chancellor, but even those two were not familiar to all.

Asked what Mr Maude did, one chairman responded: "Goodness knows!"

Another could not remember who the deputy leader was. "I can't remember his name. He has blonde hair - quite nice but shy and retiring," he said. "But it should be Ann Widdecombe."

There was also some optimism about the future. "I am a fan of people like Michael Howard and Gillian Shepherd.

HOW DID YOU FARE?

1. Sir Norman Fowler (Home Affairs): Some mistook him for Michael Howard. "Is that dark chap who was Foreign Secretary?"
2. Peter Ainsworth (Culture): "I can see his face but can't remember his name. He's quite slim. Isn't he?"
3. David Willetts (Education): "I don't know his name but I think he has glasses."
4. Tim Yeo (Agriculture): "Who? I never see him on telly."

Three party chairmen thought Gillian Shephard still spoke on education - a job she gave up at the general election, first becoming shadow Leader of the House and then spokesman on the environment, transport and the regions.

One thought the job was now held by Virginia Bottomley, the former Health Secretary.

Poor Peter Ainsworth, Chris Shephard's shadow at the culture department, was placed in the correct job by just 12 of the 50 chairmen.

Atkinson, something like that. Pass," guessed one. Another said: "I'm not at all sure. It's not important, in my opinion."

Asked to name the Conservative Party's home affairs spokesman - Sir Norman Fowler - just 18 managed to do that.

Four thought the job was held by Michael Howard, who speaks on foreign affairs.

John Redwood did much better than most, but with several eager chairmen placing him at home affairs instead of trade and industry. One de-

scribed him admiringly as "the Enoch Powell of our age".

Mr Yeo's high recognition factor seemed to have more to do with a past extra-marital affair than his job, and only 18 chairmen correctly named his current job.

One placed him at education, adding: "He's a good chap. I like him."

William Hague was popular with most of his party chairmen, and one said a local dinner at which he spoke was sold out almost instantly. Nearly all agreed he was fighting an uphill battle against a popular government and an unenthusiastic press.

"Atkinson, something like that. Pass," guessed one. Another said: "I'm not at all sure. It's not important, in my opinion."

"I am mystified as to why

we're not leaping up the polls. I frankly think the world has given up on politics," one respondent said.

Another thought Mr Hague should emulate the Prime Minister: "Mr Blair walks across water every day, but he only says what he is going to do and not what he has done. We should maybe learn from that," he said.

Others were not so sure that would work, though, and seemed to fear their every move would prove unpopular.

"Mr Hague cannot fire his guns too soon otherwise policies get shot down too soon before the general election," one explained.

Some wanted Mr Hague to ditch older members of the shadow cabinet for younger MPs, but others were not sure even that would work.

"He has got to introduce new blood, but the trouble is we don't have much young blood to choose from," said David Jackson, vice-chairman of the Boothferry party and one of the few who would be named.

Mr Ainsworth could not be contacted yesterday but the chairman of his Surrey East constituency party said a 20 per cent recognition rate among party officers was not at all bad considering he had been appointed only last summer.

"His profile has been rising

gently as you would expect. It does take time, and not many people watch parliamentary Question Time," he said. A party spokesman said the Conservatives had difficulty getting their spokesmen on the media, but that was now improving.

A widely held view that the Tories would gain popularity as Labour's failings were exposed was correct, he added.

"The newcomers are making an impact. That may not have got to Chipping Sodbury yet but it is a start," he said.

Interviews by Cathy Mayer, Dominic Field, Meera Selvanathan, Lisa Barker and Tom Kelly

British intelligence foils plot to bomb Iraq rebels

BY PAUL LASHMAR

The radio station is run by opponents of the regime of President Saddam Hussein and is beamed into Iraq. It is considered a thorn in the side of the Iraqi government.

The bomb plot has also been linked to the sudden firing of the head of the Czech counter-intelligence agency (BIS), Karel Vlcek, late Wednesday night. It has been alleged that the Czech agency had failed to uncover the planned terrorist actions.

Czech television has claimed that the former Iraqi consul to Prague, Jaber Salim, had been instructed to blow up the offices of Radio Free Iraq in Prague's Wenceslas Square. Salim then informed British intelligence.

Salim, 43, head of Iraqi intelligence operations in eastern Europe, disappeared late last year.

He is reported to have told colleagues at the Iraqi embassy in Prague that his daughter

needed urgent treatment in Austria. Salim was said to have been an "agent-in-place", passing British intelligence on Iraqi arms purchases from former Eastern Bloc countries.

The Czech government announced on Thursday that it had fired Vlcek, citing "serious professional failure". It has refused to give details and secrecy surrounds the decision. Mr Vlcek was brought in to reorganise the agency in 1997 after it was heavily criticised. However, criticism has continued.

The agency has been blamed for a number of failures that have embarrassed the Czech government. Most notably, it failed to warn the government of the sale last year of nine top Czech hotels to Corinthia Group, a Maltese company which the US considers to be Libyan-owned. As a result, the US bans Americans from staying in these key hotels.

The Czech daily newspaper *Mladá Fronta Dnes* reported that Vlcek was fired for failing to recruit Salim.

The Foreign Office yesterday refused to confirm that British intelligence had foiled the bomb plot.

"We do not comment on intelligence matters," said a Foreign Office spokesman yesterday.

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Lawrence detective is moved off case

THE DETECTIVE heading the dormant investigation into the murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence has been moved because of a corruption inquiry and replaced by John Grieve, head of the Metropolitan Police's specialist race crime unit.

Scotland Yard said yesterday that Detective Superintendent Albert Patrick had been taken off the Lawrence case as a result of the unrelated inquiry into officers based at the Flying Squad in east London.

The family's solicitor, Imran Khan, had demanded Mr Patrick's removal in a letter to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Paul Condon, last week.

News of Mr Khan's move emerged on the same day *The Independent* revealed that both he and Michael Mansfield QC, barrister for the Lawrence family, face criticism in the report of the public inquiry into Stephen's death for their failure to dissuade the family from mounting the ill-fated private prosecution of the murder suspects.

Yesterday both lawyers refused to comment on the disclosure.

There is no suggestion that Mr Patrick is directly implicated in the allegations of corruption, but he faces a disciplinary investigation understood to relate to the supervision of officers in his charge.

Mr Grieve, the highly respected head of the Met's racial and violent crime taskforce, is now the detective in charge of all the high-profile race murder investigations in London.

He is leading the hunt for the killers of Michael Menon, the black musician who was set on fire in a London street, as well as the investigation into the

case of Ricky Reel, an Asian student found drowned in the Thames.

John Stevens, Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, yesterday defended the timing of the announcement of Mr Patrick's removal.

The decision had been taken in December, he said, before Mr Khan's letter was received.

"We decided that now would be an appropriate, sensitive and sensible time to make that move," he said.

The corruption allegations date from an era before Mr Patrick headed the Lawrence investigation, and are not connected with the Lawrence case.

Mr Stevens stressed that Mr Patrick had not been charged, disciplined or suspended. His new job is to carry out a review of major area crime units.

Mr Patrick was in charge of the third squad of detectives to investigate Stephen's murder by a white gang in April 1993. No one has been convicted.

Mr Grieve hopes to follow up new lines of inquiry. But he will also ask members of the public to volunteer fresh information about the killing.

Peter Gammon, chairman of the Police Superintendents' Association, attacked what he called "the continued vilification of the police service" over with the Lawrence case.

Mr Gammon told an association conference in Chester that the clear-up rate in murders was "about the same" for black and white victims.

"Accusations of racism are still being levelled at officers involved and at the police service as a whole," he said.

"We feel the accusations are unfounded and without substance."



Peter Macdiarmid

Some of Simpson's last customers doffing their hats to the demise of a British institution

Purveyor of suiting to Mr Bertie Wooster finally shuts up shop

BY CLARE GARNER

THE SMILING face of the doorman as he greeted some of Simpson's last customers belied the discontent inside the store. Two assistants were having an indiscreet moan about the way haggle-hunters were rummaging through the last of the stock. It was all rather undignified towards the end.

At 3pm today, the doors of Simpson, in central London, will close for the last time. The shop is something of an institution, part of the world-renowned parade on Piccadilly, alongside Fortnum & Mason, Hatchard's booksellers since 1797 and the Royal Academy of Arts. Tatty red awning

assumed she was. "I wish I had been a 'Simpson' Simpson," she said. "It wouldn't have closed if I had been."

Sozos Liassides, who has worked in the men's suits department on the third floor since 1971, was trying to maintain standards to the last. The 65-year-old Cypriot, known to colleagues as "Andy" (anything else was too complicated), retired in September but agreed to stay on until the closure.

"I'm a qualified tailor," he said. "I did alterations of my own free will to satisfy the customers, because they pay my wages, not the company."

"If I wasn't satisfied with

what came from the workroom, I did it myself because then it was perfect. Many times I ripped garments to pieces and put them together again."

Mr Liassides stood beside the lonely rails of remaining suits. His own clothes hung beautifully, but then again, he had made them himself. Perhaps he could have made it into management if he'd played his cards differently, but he didn't care for politicking, he said. He cared for the clothes and the customers, a quality that probably contributed to his small place's reputation.

"I don't know," Mr Liassides murmured mournfully. "It's a pity because you can't find many people like us anymore. Great Britain used to be number one in the world for making garments. Now I don't know what's happening. Most of the stuff is imported. Why don't they train young people?"

The barber in the basement was rather jaded by the sentimentality surrounding the store's closure.

"It seems to be a very drawn-out end and I think we've got to the point now when we are glad to clear off. People are very upset that the place is closing. But you ask them if they shop here and they say 'No'."

A co-accused, Mumtaz Hussain, 41, from Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire, denies one charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice.

On the tape played yesterday, reference is made to the registration of voters. At one point, the man alleged to be Sarwar says: "One thing worth mentioning to you, the fake registrations... Labour was also doing these." The man said to be Sarwar is also heard speaking of how his enemies wanted to "destroy" him. There is mention made in the tape of the word "bombshell".

The trial resumes on Monday.

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Labour vetting panel has 'bias to stop Livingstone'

BY PAUL WAUGH
Political Correspondent

Tony Blair in which the MP said that he would not use the mayoralty to wage political warfare against the Government.

The former GLC leader's supporters reacted angrily after it was revealed that the panel formed to draw up a shortlist of candidates was heavily skewed against him.

In the most serious setback to date for Mr Livingstone's bid to become Britain's first directly-elected mayor, *The Independent* has learnt that the 12-strong panel is dominated by staunch Millbank loyalists.

The membership of the body emerged as a new controversy erupted over the Brent East MP's comments that government cuts were "whacking" the poor in the capital. Writing in the *London Evening Standard*, Mr Livingstone claimed that the most vulnerable had been hit hardest by a recent round of council cuts in London.

The comments contrasted with an earlier open letter to

Choosing a sanitised list of panel members is another attempt to erect barriers to his candidacy. The people who should really have a say are the ordinary members.

But Jim Fitzpatrick, MP for Poplar and Canning Town and chairman of the London Labour Party, said Mr Livingstone's conflicting statements proved he was trying to "dupe" party members. "It seems Ken has changed his mind about being loyal to the Labour Party before the ink is dry on his letter to Tony Blair," he said.

If Ken cannot keep his word for a mere 24 hours, how can anyone believe he would stick to his promises over a four-year mayoral term?

Joan Ryan, MP for Enfield North and member of the London Party Board, said the selection panel was representative of the ordinary party members in the capital.

"Ken's views and those of his supporters are marginal with in the Labour Party, so there is no reason why they should be on a selection panel," she said.



Ken Livingstone: Setback for mayoral campaign

that the panel will be used for all GLA assembly and the mayoral contests.

Geoff Martin, London convenor of Unison and a former member of the London Labour Party Board, said the moves proved that Millbank officials were determined to block Mr Livingstone. "It is just so transparent now that this is an attempt to kneecap Ken and the ordinary Labour voters and members will see it as such.

Dome deal set to tame 'Mail'

BY PAUL McCANN
AND PAUL LASHMAR

THE PUBLISHER of the *Daily Mail* and London Evening Standard is set to be handed the contract to produce a newspaper for the Millennium Dome, in a deal that could help the Government to overcome opposition to the £758 million project.

Associated Newspapers is believed to have beaten off bids from the Express and Mirror groups. The decision to tie up the deal will be taken next month by the government-appointed task force that advises the Dome's New Millennium Experience Commission (NMEC) on marketing.

The deal will allow Associated to produce a four-page

chance to get one of the Dome's fiercest critics on to the side of the Dome. The *Daily Mail* has christened the Dome the 'Millennium Monster', and has planned daily articles comparing the hospitals and schools that could have been built with the cost of building the Dome. If the title is printing a special supplement, it will be forced to support the project.

The *Mail* has already switched its opinions on the Dome after its sister company, the satellite channel BSkyB, paid £12m to sponsor an auditorium being built next to the Dome. For its £12m, Sky gets the right to broadcast live events from the Dome and use

the auditorium to stage its own concerts. From being opposed to the money being spent, *The Sun* is now a supporter.

Matthew Freud, the public relations executive who sits on the NMEC's advisory committee, is known to have recommended Associated for the contract particularly to end criticism from the *Evening Standard*. While the *Mail* has been vitriolic in its opposition to the project, the *Standard* has focused on the inconvenience for Londoners caused by traffic problems.

Associated said it was still awaiting a decision from the NMEC, and denied reports that it had bid £500,000.

Advoca

TODAY
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ENGLISH
PREDATOR
FIRST DIVISION

SECOND DIVISION
THIRD DIVISION

FOOTBALL
PREDATOR
FIRST DIVISION

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE
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**Sarwar
'offered
to pay
fines'**

BY NICK MEAD

A MAN said to be Labour's Mohammed Sarwar told an investigating committee that he would pay £10,000 imposed on him for lying in a statement to a jury yesterday. The associate, add, is not the man who lied to the other man if he could, added Mr. Sarwar to a statement. But the man said to be Mr. Sarwar's brother, Mr. Sarwar, told him he would lie and would pay any fine.

Nineteen witches were rounded up in Lancashire for invoking the squalid that swamped the vessel in 1633 and a draught Charles cut short his coronation tour of Scotland and retired to London. The witches died in jail. And Charles, a staunch believer in the divine right of kings, lost his head on the block in Whitehall - 350 years ago today.

A recording of fragmentary conversations, in both English and Punjabi, were played to the High Court in Liverpool by advocate Dickie Jenkins QC. A transcript of the jury.

Mr. Jenkins said the related to the second of the charges Mr. Sarwar faces, namely an attempt to pervert the course of justice by giving Mr. Islam to swear a statement in return for a £5,000 cash payment soon after the 1997 general election.

Mr. Sarwar, 46, of Cleveleys, Fylde, denied this and the other charges - of fraud, perverting the course of justice, attempting to pervert the course of justice.

The trial, which has been adjourned, will resume on 12 February.

Members of the Burntisland Heritage Trust and the Royal Navy have been searching for the *Blessing* since 1991. But until Mr. Longton's divination hopes were dwindling.

Then last September sonar equipment on board HMS *Roe*-buck located the wreck site.

The computer-produced survey images were encouraging

'Coronation finery and Charles I's silver treasure lie in estuary mud'

BY STEPHEN GOODWIN
Scotland Correspondent

KING CHARLES I thought it an act of the Devil when he watched the royal ferry *Blessing of Burntisland* capsize in the Firth of Forth, taking priceless Stuart treasure and members of his entourage to a watery grave.

Nineteen witches were rounded up in Lancashire for invoking the squalid that swamped the vessel in 1633 and a draught Charles cut short his coronation tour of Scotland and retired to London. The witches died in jail. And Charles, a staunch believer in the divine right of kings, lost his head on the block in Whitehall - 350 years ago today.

Now the waters of the Forth may be about to yield up the wooden hull of the *Blessing* as well as tons of royal possessions - perhaps worth £500m in today's values.

Marine archaeologists yesterday detailed the discovery of a wreck very similar in profile to the ill-fated ferry, buried in several feet of silt. Howard Murray, the leader of the project, said the wreck had a "better than even chance of being the *Blessing*". But though a diver has touched the heavily encrusted timber, no artefacts will be brought to the surface until the wreck has been fully surveyed and conservation facilities are in place. "I have no intention of being known as the person who destroyed Charles I's treasure," Mr. Murray said.

The wreck lies a mile off Burntisland on the north bank of the Forth, at the same spot indicated in 1997 by Jim Longton, 67, a "dowser", who used a pendulum in a technique similar to water divining.

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Top: Locator map describing the route and whereabouts of the *Blessing of Burntisland*. Above: Sonar image showing the wreckage of the Ferry. (Arrow shows location of ship) Right: Artist's impression of the ill-fated vessel. Far right: King Charles I

and last month divers went down beneath 120 feet of water to begin verification work.

Excited comparisons are being made with the recovery of the *Mary Rose*. But whereas Henry VIII's magnificent flagship was equipped as a warship,

the *Blessing* was a humble ferry carrying the silverware, finery and coronation gifts of a monarch in his pomp.

Charles I's coronation in Scotland has been largely overlooked by historians in Scotland and England. The trust hopes that

the discovery of the wreck will rekindle interest in the event north of the border and perhaps bring about a rerun. With a Scottish Parliament coming into being this year after almost 300 years, it would be fitting if another Charles - the III as he

would be - also had a coronation in Edinburgh.

"It would be a wonderful example of history coming full circle," said Alex Kilgour, a spokesman for the trust. "When we started this project in 1991, we would never have believed

we would get a Scottish Parliament. Somehow it is all coming together."

The 17th-century Edinburgh Parliament had told Charles he had to be crowned in Scotland if he wanted to wear the Scottish crown. So eight years after being

crowned in London he travelled north for one of the most extravagant tours ever undertaken by a monarch.

Fountains flowed with red wine and royal portraits by Van Dyck hung in the Royal Mile as the king paraded from the Cas-

tle down to Holyrood Palace for the coronation. From there he went to Linlithgow Palace and Stirling Castle. He revisited his birth place at Dunfermline and as an entertainment for his courtiers had a pontoon built over water on which 50 Highlanders danced a fling.

The last stop before the ferry crossing was the royal hunting lodge at Falkland Palace. His 3,000-strong entourage included 150 English nobles and 350 soldiers. And as they approached the Forth, 1,000 horses were needed to pull 200 carts loaded with gifts and royal baggage. The treasure was said to be worth £100,000 - one fifth of the entire Scottish exchequer. Not surprisingly, the likely cause of the *Blessing's* sinking was not the witches but simple overloading.

A contemporary account records that on a "somewhat tempestuous day some Englishmen, the King's servants and rich coffers were drowned in sight of the King's pinnace, (boat) which made the King melancholy that night".

To the great relief of the project team, Donald Dewar, the Secretary of State for Scotland, slapped a Protection of Wrecks order on the site yesterday to keep treasure hunters away. "We are not treasure hunters, but the knowledge that they might move in on the site has been one of our biggest worries," Mr. Kilgour said.

He dreams of finding the ferry cabin boy's pipe in the wreck with Charles' books and Bibles, not just the fabled 280-piece silver dining service of King Henry VIII.

A full recovery and conservation operation could cost £3m or £6m - way beyond the trust's means. The team are hoping for Lottery money. And if the ferry is raised, they want it to remain close to the old port of Burntisland.

The story of the coronation tour and loss of the *Blessing* is told in a book launched yesterday by Mr. Murray. Sales will help to fund further work. Copies at £9.75 can be ordered via Freephone 0800 833 557 or Internet site www.kingcharles-wreck.co.uk

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gstone'**

Antique dealers hammer Sotheby's online auction

BY LOUISE JURY

PLANS BY Sotheby's to steal a march on rivals with the first major auctions in Britain through the Internet have angered art and antique dealers.

Leading dealers have been approached by the auction house and offered incentives to supply art, antiques and jewellery for the revolutionary sales.

The British art and antique dealers were made an offer on commission if they agreed to work only with Sotheby's for the next two or three years. They have to sign within seven days.

The British Antique Dealers' Association has now written to its members, warning them to be cautious of the offer as other opportunities should arise at "virtual auctions" take off in the

Sotheby's New York office is

spearheading the company's global move into Internet auctions.

The announcement last week immediately boosted the business's share price and follows the success of other online auctioneers such as eBay in the States. Diana Brooks, president of Sotheby's Holdings, said: "It is clear that the Internet is superbly suited for holding auctions."

Some critics claim that if Sotheby's succeeds, they would have a virtual monopoly before rivals Christie's follow suit later in the year.

One antiques dealer said yesterday that the Sotheby's deal was "outrageous and very uncompetitive. There aren't enough of these goods for nor-

mal auctions and virtual auctions as well so they need to get the dealers on board. If they do, they know Christie's won't have a chance when they start."

As goods will not be examined by the auctioneers in the way they would be in a normal auction, it is understood that Sotheby's will rely on dealers with good reputations supplying items for sale. Most dealers sell on some old stock through auction houses.

Elaine Dean, of the British Antiques Dealers' Association, said the proposition was an "interesting" one that they had to take seriously.

But she said: "We are urging our members to be cautious before they sign up for something for three years. We do feel that seven days isn't very long to sign quite an extensive con-

tract. We're saying be careful."

An art trade insider said the Sotheby's offer seemed to have outraged many of the dealers.

"They feel they are being pushed around. I don't think it has gone down too well."

David Redden, an executive vice-president of Sotheby's, said it was investing more than £15m in the service and needed to ensure it had enough property to sell. The dealers he spoke to were very excited by their offer.

Christopher Davidge, chief executive officer at Christie's, said details of their plans would be revealed on 1 March. But he said: "Christie's will not be proposing any arrangements that restrict competition in the marketplace, as we believe this runs counter to the philosophy of the Internet."

Police chief goes after 999 riddle

BY JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

ONE OF the country's most senior police chiefs has retired after officers from his force went to his home in response to a "999" call, it emerged yesterday.

Earlier this week Robert Turnbull, 51, the Deputy Chief Constable of Cleveland, announced he was stepping down five years before his £2,000-per-year contract was due to end. He was involved in conducting one of the country's largest police corruption inquiries.

Mr. Turnbull's surprise decision to retire was announced soon after an incident on 20 January when Cleveland police officers visited his home in response to an emergency call.

The call is believed to have been made by Mr. Turnbull's wife, Margaret, from the couple's home on the Wynyard estate near Stockton, Teesside. It is understood the person who

Charge football stars, says judge

A JUDGE said yesterday that professional footballers should be prosecuted for assaulting opponents and brought to court to set an example.

Judge Richard Benson made the comments after hearing the case at Nottingham Crown Court of a 49-year-old amateur footballer who headed up an opposing player during a match.

Judge Benson said: "I am unable to recall in this country a single footballer in the Premier League or lower who has been prosecuted for this. Sometimes the Scots get it right. Duncan Ferguson, who assaulted a player, was sent away for six months and quite right too. If something like that did happen, it would surely filter down through our game."

The judge earlier mentioned a number of other cases: "Paolo di Canio pushed over a referee. He was given two years' probation and ordered to pay his victim £300 compensation.

That is common assault in anyone's book. Why on earth he was not brought up on these charges I do not know."

"And there was the match between Arsenal and Southampton where the TV camera caught a Southampton player having his jaw broken. The offending player ended up being banned from the game for nine matches. The report and TV evidence would have been enough to have had a high-profile player made an example of in the courts."

Donald Annable, 49, of Headland Avenue, Elkesley, Nottinghamshire, admitted causing actual bodily harm to Malcolm Duncan while playing for Clumber Inn against Epworth over 30s on 29 August last year.

He was given two years' probation and ordered to pay his victim £300 compensation.

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The unknown gems in our urban midst

NOTEBOOK



IAN JACK

NEXT TO the farmyard barn, the nonconformist chapel is the most threatened building type in England. This information comes from the Historic Chapels Trust, which was founded six years ago to preserve the best of them, and now looks after 11 chapels scattered from Northumberland to Devon (there are separate bodies for Wales and Scotland).

Nonconformism has never been as fashionable as Anglicanism, nor so well-funded, and for doctrinal reasons its places of worship tend to be plain, "preaching-boxes" is the term often applied. But it was certainly popular and bewilderingly diverse. England has as many non-Anglican as Anglican churches - about 18,000 of them - but who can now tell the difference between Methodists and Independent Methodists, Baptists and Congregationalists, Unitarians and United Reformed?

All over England, in cities, on moorland, in old factory towns, their separate heaps of brick and stone stand as evidence of once-passionate debate and schism and clique, as well as to self-improvement and belief in God. Sometimes they have been converted to Indian restaurants, nightclubs, flats, second-hand furniture warehouses. Sometimes they stand open to the rain and wind. A surprising number, given the state of British Christianity, still draw clusters of people on a Sunday to listen to sermons and sing hymns.

In north London, I live quite close to a chapel. The Union Chapel (Congregationalist) stands at the northern end of Upper Street in Islington, Upper Street's very familiar to me. Over almost 30 years I have watched it change from a working-class high street to one of the chief parade grounds of London's young well-to-do, lined with bars, restaurants, estate agents and

in the Almeida, the most fashionable theatre in London. But the Union Chapel, which after the town hall may well be the street's largest building, I knew nothing.

I noticed its clock, I noticed that it was a Victorian building set in the middle of a Georgian terrace. I wondered who, if anyone, went there and if anyone had ever answered the usual poster invitations to come inside and get to know Christ a little better. I was mildly surprised that it had not been demolished.

On Wednesday, my ignorance was corrected when the Union Chapel's minister, the Rev Janet Wootton, was good enough to show me the inside. Nothing had prepared me (I should have read Pevsner) for the sheer size and spectacle of it. The Union Chapel has polished oak pews that once held 3,000 people, galleries, stained glass, decorative tiles, marble, a great organ originally powered by water (which went on its course to flush the church lavatories).

According to Pevsner (later consulted) the style is 13th-century French Gothic, with a central plan inspired by the church of Santa Fosca in Torcello, on the Venetian lagoon. But that is just the chapel itself. At the rear of the main building lies a jumble of corridors and handsome halls built for Sunday School tuition and enlightened public meetings.

Congregationalism must have seemed a mighty and unquenchable movement when the chapel was opened in 1877. And now? Christian churchgoers account for 2 per cent of London's population. Mrs Wootton preaches to a congregation of 30.

She took me up into the pulpit, which she never now uses (too authoritarian to be modern), and explained the theological reasoning behind the church's design. The pews arranged on three sides had no hierarchy - every worshipper could see and hear equally well. How the windows had no sills - and therefore no room for graven images. How the organ was screened - so as not to tempt the faithful into the worship of musical instruments.

She pointed to the ceiling, more than a hundred feet up, and said that behind the cupola lay an Archimedes screw, a great propeller to expel the foul air that would gather from a 2,000-strong congregation. Today, the problem is not ventilation but heat.

The Union Chapel was nearly demolished in 1980. Its survival owes a lot to the faith of Mrs Wootton and her congregation, but also to secular influence. The chapel is now listed by English Heritage as Grade II*, and the signage inside it is not always biblical instruction. As well as Sure and Steadfast, there is also No smoking and This way to the bar.

Thanks to an associated charity, the Union Chapel Project, all kinds of non-Christian events happen here. Rock concerts, readings, theatre rehearsals, Seamus Heaney, Eddie Izzard, Simon Rattle. The egalitarian beliefs of Congregationalism have given it not only Biblical instruction. As well as Sure and Steadfast, there is also No smoking and This way to the bar.

Out in the traffic of Upper Street again, I felt the slight sadness of the non-believer. The Union Chapel does good work; its halls take in and feed the homeless, children with learning difficulties attend classes there. A shame, then, that one cannot share the spiritual motive of it, believe the story. In a street and a world consumed by market forces - "renovated family semi-det



The mighty Union Chapel in Islington, north London, opened in 1877 when Congregationalism seemed unquenchable

Tom Craig

deeds do not proscribe the sale of alcohol. Mrs Wootton has done the research.

A great deal of money still needs to be raised, about £3m for repairs to the fabric alone.

The new plan is to make it "a theatre for the human voice" and focus on lectures, debates and choral concerts. Nonconformism is rich in the traditions of dissent and hymns (perhaps its greatest, and wrongfully ignored, contribution to British culture). The Union Chapel would be a glorious and appropriate place to hear both.

Out in the traffic of Upper Street again, I felt the slight sadness of the non-believer. The Union Chapel does good work; its halls take in and feed the homeless, children with learning difficulties attend classes there. A shame, then, that one cannot share the spiritual motive of it, believe the story.

In a street and a world consumed by market forces - "renovated family semi-det

house with 100ft gdn, en-suite bathroom to the master bed, £55,000" - the Union Chapel is a refreshing and necessary thing. It was good, at last, to have discovered it.

LATE LAST year I wrote in this column about the wartime documentary films of Humphrey Jennings; about their brilliance as propaganda (because they were so reticently patriotic) and about the poetic lessons they could teach any contemporary British politician who was struggling to evoke a new British identity.

William Hague obviously did not read this, but then he is a busy little leader. His speech last week on Britishness, by which he may have meant Englishness, was the most terrifying encounter with foolishness since I last heard the late broadcaster Wilfred Pickles. You could see what the Tory leader was trying to do. Out with John Major's

fifties nostalgia and Baroness Thatcher's Churchilliana; in with something bang up to date. Consequently, we got the British as a "brassy" people who liked soap operas and a good laugh, and also (naturally) nourished a sense of fair play. It is not entirely inaccurate, but it would also fit Brazil or indeed any entrepreneurial nation with more than one channel.

Also, it might double the emigration figures. He and the Chancellor, Gordon Brown (to whom Tony Blair seems to have dished out the "British question" job in the Cabinet), will have to try harder if they are to persevere as national inspirers. Here is some advice, which came in a letter to me this month from Mary-Lou Jennings, the director's daughter.

She writes: "I was interested in your last point: the present need for some cunning, concrete poetry (if ideas of Britishness are to be revived). My father's work in film was,

I believe, a mission based on his belief in the duty of a poet. In 1938 he did a series of broadcasts on poetry and the public, and in the one on poetry and national life he quoted Apollinaire whom, he said, believed that poets should stand with their backs to the future and face the past because it was in the past that he could discover who he was and how he had come to be him".

"My father added, 'That idea of extracting an idea of what I am from the past is a thing that a poet does for himself, and especially it is a thing that he can do for the community. I mean, he can try and tell them who they are... [and talk about] the figures, the monuments, the achievements, the defeats, or whatever it may be that have made the community what it is.' That was what his films, like *Listen to Britain*, were about."

Politicians are not poets, of course, and you could argue

that the past for too long has been a crippling national disease. But politicians who have tried to abolish it - Pol Pot, Stalin - failed among their many other sins to understand human and civic need.

Finally, a note on Jennings. He was probably the finest, most inventive documentary film-maker Britain has produced. He died young, aged 42, when he fell from a rock while he was filming in Greece. His daughter writes that she is beginning to think him "almost forgotten except among film buffs". She also says that he has no memorial of any kind. Even his grave in Athens has been destroyed.

Next year will be the fiftieth anniversary of his death. He deserves to be remembered in some permanent form - a plaque, a bust, an award, a scholarship. I would be happy to pass on letters to Mary-Lou Jennings with suggestions about where and how.

IN BRIEF

Man accused of 14 sex charges

SIDNEY COOKE appeared before magistrates in Newbury, Berks, yesterday, charged with 14 serious sexual offences involving eight alleged victims. Mr Cooke, 71, said to be of no fixed address, had been arrested on Tuesday at Yeovil, Somerset.

'Chunnel cheat' claims innocence

AMAN has denied using Eurostar trips to cheat two councils out of housing benefit when he was in fact living in Belgium. Jean-Paul Ngolo Mpati Moka, 32, told the Old Bailey he only travelled to Belgium to preach. He denies gaining a total of £4,653 from Haringey and Hounslow councils by deception.

Extra cash keeps RSC on the road

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE Company and Welsh National Opera tours have been rescued by an emergency package of one-off Arts Council grants. Opera North, the Royal Court Theatre and the Contemporary Dance Trust have also benefited from the £1.46 million fund.

Porsches recalled for airbag faults

PORSCHE IS recalling more than 5,000 vehicles, including 400 in the UK, because of an airbag problem. The recall of M-registration 911 sports cars follows the discovery of an electrical fault that can cause airbags to activate at random.

JACK STRAW: PROFILE



'Priggish' is a tribute paid by the old and dim to the precocious

IN THE WEEKEND REVIEW PAGE 5

Do not demonise Islam, says Carey

BY CLARE GARNER

THE ARCHBISHOP of Canterbury urged Christians and Muslims yesterday to avoid "demonising" one another and instead to focus on working for the common good.

Dr George Carey, who is on an eight-day visit to the Middle East, became the first Archbishop of Canterbury to address the 15,000 worshippers before Friday prayers at Abu Nour Mosque, the largest mosque in Damascus.

He began with the words: "Salaam aleikum! Peace be with you all!" before going on to say: "Sadly, when we look at the history of the world all too often we find it littered with the remains of conflicts between Christians and Muslims. This has led to a culture of distrust and to the tendency for each of us to demonise the other."

Such "demonising" ignored the great contribution both faiths can make to the world, he added. "The influence of our faiths, the strength of our worship, the enduring force of our

traditions and the commitment to family life and the lives of our communities gives us a duty and a remarkable opportunity to make a significant contribution to the human family and its future," he said.

Dr Carey warned against "aggressive proselytism". Both Christianity and Islam were missionary religions, a fact that could not be disguised nor denied, he said.

"But, despite all the inherent risks in this recognition, there is no reason why it should lead us towards conflict. Rather, it should instil in us a sense of respect, a respect for such enthusiasm and devotion of faith," Dr Carey said.

He hoped his presence at the mosque before Friday prayers "will be seen by Muslims everywhere as my commitment to a dialogue based on friendship, integrity and honesty - and above all respect between the members of both our faiths".

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Common sense in a crazy world

Heads' pay rise twice that of teachers

PRIMARY HEAD teachers will receive pay increases of between 6 and 9 per cent this year as part of the teachers' pay settlement, which is due to be announced on Monday.

Classroom teachers, by contrast, are expected to be awarded a rise of just under 4 per cent, well above the inflation rate of 2.5 per cent.

Teachers reacted angrily last night to the news that classroom teachers were to receive "inferior" treatment to

BY JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

about £32,500. Heads of secondary schools will also receive higher-than-average rises of between 4 and 6 per cent.

In the last academic year 28 per cent of primary headships had to be advertised because no suitable candidate came forward in the first round. One in five secondary headships was also re-advertised. The worst difficulties are in inner London where 60 per cent of headships were not filled at the first attempt. David Hart, general

secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said: "At last the School Teachers' Review Body has started to recognise the size of heads' jobs as well as the need to resolve the current severe recruitment crisis. More still needs to be done to reward heads for their heavy responsibilities." But Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, said: "This is pretty

appalling treatment for the poor infant in the classroom. There is no justification for this inferior treatment of ordinary teachers. This is a serious error and it will sour discussions on the Green Paper very seriously indeed."

Ministers are holding talks with teacher unions on a Green Paper, which would introduce performance-related pay and offer substantial increases to teachers who match new standards. Doug McAvoy, general

secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said the pay rise would do nothing to resolve the recruitment crisis across the profession. "Three or four per cent this year is enough to cover the increases. The rise for teachers will not be phased. This year teachers were given a 3.8 per cent increase but its value was cut to 2.6 per cent over the year as 1.8 per cent was not paid until last month.

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, believes that the big changes to

the profession in the Green Paper which proposes salaries of up to £35,000 for the best classroom teachers, will help to solve the recruitment crisis. ■ Scotland's biggest teaching union yesterday angrily rejected a pay offer from local authorities calling it a "deep insult". Union bosses said the undisclosed offer on pay and conditions made by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities earlier this week was "wholly inadequate".

Road pricing runs into trouble with Blair focus group

JOHN PRESCOTT's flagship road pricing policy has run up against fierce opposition from the Government's own mass focus group, a study revealed yesterday.

Nearly 60 per cent of the 5,000-strong People's Panel oppose Labour's plans to cut traffic jams and pollution by charging motorists £2 a day to drive through town centres.

The panel, which was set up by Tony Blair last year to make Whitehall more responsive to public opinion, was found to be overwhelmingly against increases in car parking charges and cuts in road building to fund public transport improvements.

The depth of opposition to Mr Prescott's key transport policies was revealed in a wide-ranging Mori survey of the panel's views, published by the Cabinet Office. The survey showed that the public were also highly suspicious of genetically modified foods, backed tighter controls on smoking in public places and wanted more directly elected mayors.

The panel, which is canvassed regularly on a rolling basis, criticised the Care in the Community programme and complained that most public services were secretive about their workings. However it was the Secretary of State for

change a transport policy that is ill-thought out and highly unpopular."

When asked about food safety, the panel's big concern was the long-term effects of pesticides and genetically modified crops, both ranking higher than BSE and food poisoning.

To respond to the worries over GM foods and other biotechnology issues, a series of workshops with the public is to be held by the Office of Science and Technology in coming weeks, officials confirmed. Half the participants wanted complete smoking bans in restaurants, with more than a third backing such measures for offices open to the public.

Cabinet Office officials claimed that the panel was a "world first" which used a representative slice of the population to keep ministers in touch with public opinion.

Jack Cunningham, Minister for the Cabinet Office, unveiled the figures with a pledge that the Government would listen to the concerns. "The panel has been established to seek people's view on improving public services. It is a unique development and will play an important part in shaping the Modernising Government White Paper, which I plan to publish at Easter," he said.

The Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, enjoying a warm welcome at a school in his constituency - the £2.9m Victoria Dock Primary School in Hull - which he opened officially yesterday. It is the country's first 'private finance initiative' school

John Purling



New investment rates from the Cheshire

Effective from 1 February 1999

INTEREST RATE	NEW RATE		PREVIOUS RATE	
	BASIC RATE	INTEREST RATE + 50% BONUS	BASIC RATE	INTEREST RATE + 50% BONUS
GENERAL RATES				
GROSS %	NET %	GROSS %	NET %	AER %
4.20	3.36	5.04	4.40	5.23
4.10	3.26	4.93	4.30	5.14
2.50	2.00	2.45	2.40	2.65
2.00	1.50	2.05	2.00	2.25
1.00	0.50	1.50	1.00	1.50
0.50	0.25	0.75	0.50	0.75
0.25	0.12	0.30	0.25	0.30
0.10	0.05	0.15	0.10	0.15
0.05	0.02	0.08	0.05	0.08
0.01	0.005	0.02	0.01	0.02
INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS				
GROSS %	NET %	AER %	GROSS %	NET %
4.20	3.36	5.04	4.20	5.23
4.10	3.26	4.93	4.10	5.14
2.50	2.00	2.45	2.50	2.65
2.00	1.50	2.05	2.00	2.25
1.00	0.50	1.50	1.00	1.50
0.50	0.25	0.75	0.50	0.75
0.25	0.12	0.30	0.25	0.30
0.10	0.05	0.15	0.10	0.15
0.05	0.02	0.08	0.05	0.08
0.01	0.005	0.02	0.01	0.02
ACCOUNTS NO LONGER AVAILABLE TO NEW INVESTORS				
GENERAL RATES				
TAX FREE RATE %	AER %	TAX FREE RATE %	AER %	
4.20	3.36	5.04	4.20	
4.10	3.26	4.93	4.10	
2.50	2.00	2.45	2.50	
2.00	1.50	2.05	2.00	
1.00	0.50	1.50	1.00	
0.50	0.25	0.75	0.50	
0.25	0.12	0.30	0.25	
0.10	0.05	0.15	0.10	
0.05	0.02	0.08	0.05	
0.01	0.005	0.02	0.01	
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0.50	0.25	0.75	0.50	0.75
0.25	0.12	0.30	0.25	0.30
0.10	0.05	0.15	0.10	0.15
0.05	0.02	0.08	0.05	0.08
0.01	0.005	0.02	0.01	0.02
STANDARD SAVINGS				
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4.10	3.26	4.93	4.10	5.14
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0.25	0.12	0.30	0.25	0.30
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2.00	1.50	2.05	2.00	2.25
1.00	0.50	1.50	1.00	1.50
0.50	0.25	0.75	0.50	0.75
0.25	0.12	0.30	0.25	0.30
0.10	0.05	0		

Trail of a scam that robbed Customs of £57m

BY PAUL LASHMAR

THE SCALE of the scam would have brought tears to the eyes of the average fags 'n' booze bootlegger plying their trade between Dover and Calais. A racket that avoided paying duties of at least £57m, and stacked up proceeds running into millions, so many millions that Customs investigators have still not been able to calculate exactly how much the swindlers netted.

Britain's largest and best organised smuggling gang, which flooded Britain with cheap alcohol and cigarettes, has been smashed after a year-long international operation by Customs investigators.

More than 430 articulated lorries of top brands, including Bacardi, Malibu, Stella Artois drinks and Winston cigarettes were smuggled into Britain. The chieftains of the gang had started buying yachts and villas in Spain from their millions when they were arrested.

A series of trials in which eight Britons were convicted has just ended. Customs are now applying for confiscation orders against several of the men to seize their assets.

At the centre of the racket was Alan Carlton, 48, from Dartford, Kent, the proprietor of Carlton Transport, whose lorries smuggled the contraband.

Photographs of the tattooed and burly Carlton taken in Spain show a hard-faced man with a beer gut, a lurid taste in Hawaiian shirts, an ever-present mobile phone in his hand.

Also central was Alan Brown, the 62-year-old chubby, bearded former mayor of Burnham-on-Crouch in Essex. Using the alias of James Heywood, his company, Melrose Trading, was responsible for shipping the contraband.

The third key figure in the racket was Malcolm Hamilton, 54, from Cold Norton, Essex, who eventually gave evidence for the prosecution after going to the run to Turkey.

The racket started with duty-free alcohol and consignments of cigarettes being illegally diverted from the destinations stated on their customs documents. In a vast "carousel" operation, 40ft lorries started in England and drove to destinations in Europe before returning home fully loaded. At each point, high-value loads were picked up and dropped off to avoid tax and were sold on the black economy.

For a year, British Customs co-operated with European colleagues to smash the racket. More than 400 Customs officers finally swooped in simultaneous raids across the UK and Europe in late 1995.

Alan Reddrop, the officer in charge of operation, said yesterday: "This was very much an EU racket rather than a UK one. We got a lot of help from our colleagues in Belgium, Spain and France."

There have now been two major trials at Birmingham Crown Court, the first time prosecutions have successfully

Alan Carlton, right, ringleader of the smuggling gang, whose members had started to invest their ill-gotten millions in the high life of southern Spain

MSI

rested several Carlton lorry drivers and seized their loads. On 12 September two Carlton lorries were intercepted in south-west France. One of the British drivers was being accompanied by a Spaniard who turned out to be a known tobacco smuggler. The vehicles

and their cigarettes were seized and the men arrested.

Eight days later, a meeting was held in Brussels between senior officials from the UK, Spain, Belgium and France. They agreed to work together to unravel the smugglers' operation. All movements of Carlton's lorries were monitored as they moved to and fro across EU borders. By November, Customs felt they had enough evidence to bring prosecutions.

Simultaneous raids were mounted in Birmingham, Leeds, London and Glasgow, and 25 people were arrested.

Searches were also carried out in Belgium.

Customs believe the conspirators evaded duty on the 300 lorries on the carousel scam, a further 80 lorries diverted in the UK and 50 more loads of cigarettes sent to Spain.

There have been two trials

dealing with different elements of the fraud. Carlton denied smuggling but was found guilty of the UK diversions. He was jailed for six and a half years.

Brown and Francis Savage, 63, of east London, both admitted two charges of smuggling. Savage was jailed for three months.

Brown is ill and has yet to be sentenced. Hamilton will serve the equivalent of three years.

Four other lorry drivers, bribed with £600 cash bonuses for each trip, were given suspended sentences of 12 to 18 months for their part in diverting loads.

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Malcolm Hamilton, a key figure in the racket, relaxing with his girlfriend Susan Jagger.

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Roddy Doyle: People laughed at 'horse in lift' scene

Horses of Dublin starve as floods hit grazing

THE SIGHT of horses grazing peacefully on patches of grass between the ugly concrete tower blocks in north Dublin has long been viewed as an alternative tourist attraction.

Tethered on patches of common ground or allowed to wander freely around the city, they are a familiar sight to residents and were even immortalised in the film *The Commitments*, where they were shown being led into the lift of a multi-storey building.

The writer Roddy Doyle was forced to defend the scene after it was greeted with howls of derision by those who had never been to the city. Dubliners hardly raised an eyebrow.

But the horses may not form part of the urban landscape for much longer.

Most of the animals belong to teenagers and young children who tether them on open land in parts of the city. Now

BY KATE WATSON-SMYTH

many horses and ponies have been left to fend for themselves, dying a slow death from starvation because their young owners simply cannot afford to feed them.

The constant downpours that have drenched the country since last summer have led to such severe flooding that there is a drastic shortage of fodder for both the horses, and for thousands of cattle on the

This has led to a sharp increase in the prices of what little hay and silage there is, and many of the young owners – some barely teenagers – cannot afford the feed because even a small bale of hay now costs £3.50.

Last Thursday, horse wardens removed seven dead animals from open land in west Dublin. Earlier, a further 42



A youngster out riding on a west Dublin estate, one of the areas where horses have been slowly starving through a lack of grass and hay for them to eat. John Cogill

emaciated horses were removed by local authority staff from open land nearby between Clondalkin and Lucan to the west of the city.

They had been forced to eat raw earth in their desperate hunt for food.

The lack of fodder has also affected Ireland's dwindling number of livestock farmers. Last year's long spells of rain left little time for muddy pasture ground to recover, reducing the harvest of available hay usually held by farmers, and affecting output in east coast areas that normally generate a surplus.

Falling meat prices have meant that farmers cannot raise the money to buy supplementary fodder and many have left their cattle to fend for themselves by grazing at the side of the road. Last week, in a stark illustration of the problem, a desperate farmer dumped 20 emaciated cows and calves near Rosscarbery, in Co Cork.

The animals' identifying ear-tags had been cut off before the carcasses were abandoned, to prevent the health authorities from tracing the owner.

Gerard Buckley, the local veterinary officer, said there had been other cases of animal dumping elsewhere in Co Cork and warned of potential health hazards. He predicted the prob-

lem would increase as the fodder crisis continues.

Irish farm organisations and animal welfare groups are becoming increasingly alarmed at the problem, and Ciaran O'Donovan, the chief executive of the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ISPCA), was meeting officials from the Department of Agriculture yesterday to beg for emergency funds.

"We have had 25 per cent more rainfall than usual," he said. "Normally at this time of year the grass should be growing – but the rain is continuing, the ground has turned to mud with animals trampling on it and nothing will grow. So we

have a shortage of food left over from last summer and the prospect that no grass will grow until April or even May."

The ISPCA said that cattle were facing serious health problems because they had been left standing in water-logged fields with no dry shelter to lie down and rest.

The problem is worst in pockets of the country where few farmers are able to afford those supplies that are on sale at premium prices.

Areas suffering the worst fodder shortages include west Limerick, Roscommon and parts of Donegal. In badly hit areas the price of silage has more than doubled in 12

months. The crisis has led to an additional £1.1m turnover of commercial animal feed-stuffs, up by 30 per cent on the normal sales level since last June.

Teagasc, the Irish state farm advisory body, has played down suggestions of a national feed emergency and urged farmers with problems to contact it for advice.

A spokesman confirmed that between 40,000 and 50,000 of the Irish Republic's 149,500 farmers are now in difficulty. The total number of farmers has dropped by 30,000 since 1995.

Derek Cunningham, a spokesman for the Irish Farmers' Association, confirmed that

the poor weather and the collapse in beef prices has caused the problem.

"There are a lot of farmers who don't have the cash and they've held on to animals they can't get rid of," he said. "Some people are finding it very difficult to get rid of poor-quality animals."

As a result many farmers have opted to sell far more cattle than usual since Christmas, leading to even lower prices from meat processors.

This has put them in a Catch-22 situation, squeezed between the prohibitively high feed prices and their reduced income as cattle markets yield lower revenues.

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Dobson gives GPs power over NHS

A SEISMIC SHIFT in the NHS will switch control of the vast bulk of its £20bn budget from hospitals and health authorities to family doctors and nurses. The Health Bill revealed yesterday is to transform general practice into the driving force behind the NHS.

From April 1991 Primary Care Groups covering England will be established, replacing the discredited GP funding system, which covers half the population, with the eventual aim of giving the groups responsibility for all the care provided to their patients.

The Bill also establishes new mechanisms to prevent a repeat of the Bristol heart babies disaster by instituting checks on quality in every hospital, known as "clinical governance", and a hit squad called the Commission for Health Improvement to solve problems.

Other measures include the

trend to more care in GP surgeries and health centres. By giving family doctors and their professional colleagues control of the health budget, the range of services provided in surgeries and health centres will expand. Hospitals will become increasingly specialised and there will be fewer of them.

At the heart of the Bill lies the plans for general practice. Initially, the Primary Care Groups, made up of about 50 GPs each, will advise health authorities on allocation of funds to hospitals and community services, moving by stages to take over their commissioning functions.

From April 2000, the first Primary Care Trusts will be set up, running community hospitals and district nursing services and offering a low-tech alternative to the hi-tech care of large hospitals. Patients will not notice the change at first, but the moves will accelerate the

lead to the development of walk-in health centres on the high street, providing day surgery, health screening, physiotherapy and advice clinics. Money from the NHS modernisation fund will pay for complete computerisation of doctors' surgeries.

He said: "The changes we are making will take time. But [they] will totally transform how the health service cares for patients. They will deliver a system moulded to the needs of the patient, rather than the current arrangements, which sometimes appear to be organised the other way around."

Department of Health officials said the aim of the Bill was to make the NHS faster and more convenient for patients, to guarantee standards across the country, and to ensure that healthcare and social services worked together to meet the needs of patients.

Amateur actress spoke of her hate for lover's pregnant wife

AN AMATEUR ACTRESS accused of murder confided that she hated her lover's wife only weeks before she killed her a court heard yesterday.

Claire Brown told the jury at Chester Crown Court that her friend, Jenny Cupit, was upset when she learnt Kathryn Linaker, a deputy head teacher, was pregnant.

Mrs Cupit, a former hairdresser of Borrowdale Avenue, Warrington, has pleaded not guilty to murdering Mrs Linaker, 33, in front of her four-month-old baby at her home in Penketh on 17 April last year. The mother-of-two, who is 24, has admitted manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility but

phone call just weeks before her death: "Jenny was upset, saying that Chris wasn't going to leave; that she hated Kathy because she had something that Jenny didn't. She said Kathy had a perfect family and that hers was breaking up."

Under cross-examination, the witness told Adrian Fulford QC, for the defence, that she was worried about the effect the affair was having on her friend.

The defendant's mother-in-law, Barbara Cupit, told the jury she believed the defendant had a split personality. She said: "Jenny was a very affectionate girl but could be very hurtful."

The court then heard the tape of Mrs Cupit's interview

with Detective Sergeant Ian Hughes at Warrington police station after the attack.

On the tape, Mrs Cupit said: "She [Mrs Linaker] said she hated me even if I wasn't involved with Chris. He paid me more attention than her."

"She came out of the kitchen with a knife, I grabbed the knife, I didn't mean it – I love her."

Mrs Cupit described to the officer how Mrs Linaker became angry: "I told her to calm down, and that we would talk about it and sort it out. She was really starting to scare me. She came at me with a small knife."

"I turned and grabbed her, and cut my hand on the knife."

The trial continues.

Nato may send 200,000 to Kosovo

AS RENEWED violence erupted in Kosovo, Nato military chiefs stepped up detailed preparations for the politically charged option of sending ground troops to Kosovo. Up to 200,000 men could be required, depending on the outcome of negotiations between Belgrade and the ethnic Albanians on a settlement of the conflict.

Early yesterday, Yugoslav security forces killed 25 ethnic Albanians in a raid on a suspected rebel hideout. Later,

BY KATHERINE BUTLER
in Brussels

Yugoslav army tanks began firing at Kosovo Liberation Army positions near the village of Ljupce, about nine miles of Pristina.

Panicking refugees, who had taken cover in Albanian homes in the area, escaped fighting two days earlier, plied on tractors and horse carts to flee what they feared was an imminent onslaught. One Serb police-

man was killed in the attack on the village of Rogovo, about 45 miles south-west of Pristina, near the Albanian border. International monitors confirmed the "shocking" death toll, which the Albanians claimed was brought about by an army assault on a civilian bus.

The raid occurred as the six-nation Contact Group called all parties in the conflict to an international conference next week at Rambouillet near Paris to negotiate a settlement with-

in seven days, granting "substantial autonomy" - but not independence - to the Albanian-majority province.

If these talks succeed, then deployment of Nato troops on the ground will be essential.

"Clearly, guaranteeing implementation of the deal will be a key part of the negotiations," a Nato official said. "Otherwise the agreement will not hold up, especially where you have a hell of a lot of weapons, a proliferation of armed groups,

a legacy of hatred and history of human rights abuse."

Germany yesterday joined Britain and France in pledging troops to police an autonomy deal and Washington is edging towards acceptance of the idea.

Even so Nato officials admit that it is extremely difficult to plan precisely for a ground troop presence, when the shape of any political settlement is still unknown.

It remains to be seen for example whether unarmed veri-

fiers from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (Osce) would continue to have a role.

Three scenarios have been outlined by military planners. These suggest that 36,000 is the minimum number of troops required to monitor a ceasefire and peace agreement if the talks go ahead and produce the desired result. A 2,300 strong French-led Nato unit stationed in Macedonia for the evacuation of Osce monitors would proba-

bly provide the vanguard of this presence. If talks break down with no agreement on the political future of Kosovo but a ceasefire holds, then Nato planners estimate that 60,000 men will be needed - as well as an explicit agreement with President Milosevic on the terms of a ground troop presence, Nato diplomats said.

If talks fail and there is no ceasefire then 200,000 troops would be required to impose peace. This would drag Nato

into a protracted engagement and even full-scale war with the Serbs. Nato planners say troop deployment in this case would have to be preceded by an aerial bombing campaign to cripple Serb defences.

It is conceivable but unlikely that Stör, the 34,000 strong Nato troop presence in Bosnia, would be "siphoned off" to boost the numbers in Kosovo, one Nato official said adding: "We will still need a strong presence in Bosnia."

Lewinsky's evidence to be on video

THE ONE-TIME White House trainee, Monica Lewinsky, faces further questioning about her relationship with President Clinton on Monday, when she becomes the first of three witnesses called to testify in the Senate impeachment trial. Under the rules passed by the Senate late on Thursday, however, the interview will take the form of a "deposition" - questioning under oath in private.

Whether Ms Lewinsky or either of the other two named witnesses - Mr Clinton's business friend, Vernon Jordan, and his aide, Sidney Blumenthal - appear in the Senate in person will be decided only after the depositions have been taken and made available to senators. Although the interviews will be videotaped, there is no provision at present either to them to be viewed by the Senate or to be made public.

The outline arrangements for the continuation of the trial, which stuttered through a series of acrimonious stalemates this week, envisage final votes on the two Articles of Impeachment against Mr Clinton - the one alleging perjury, the other obstruction of justice - on or before 12 February, the day before a congressional holiday for Abraham Lincoln's birthday. Democrats' hopes of

BY MARY DEJEVSKY
in Washington

making that date definite failed, however, as did their attempt to limit the duration of the depositions and to prevent the tapes of the witness' testimony ever becoming public. All these highly contentious points will be subject to Senate votes once the depositions have been taken.

Each of the witnesses will be questioned by one of the House prosecutors, and two senators will preside. Defence lawyers for Mr Clinton will be able to cross-examine them. One day has been set aside for each, so the deposition stage should be over by next Thursday, when the Senate is set to reconvene.

While the Republicans were generally satisfied the trial would proceed, there was disappointment in the Senate and wider political circles that the arrangements had had to be put to a vote and that the vote had been on party lines. Behind the scenes, the White House was also concerned about a plan for ending the trial that was gaining currency in the Senate.

This would entail approval of a "finding of fact" statement, which would set out what senators believed to be the truth of the Lewinsky affair before they voted on whether to convict.



Soldiers attempting to prevent a mob from breaking into the Red Cross supply centre in Armenia, Colombia, yesterday Henry Romero

Rioting breaks out in Armenia

BY PHIL DAVISON
in Armenia

FOOD RIOTS broke out in this earthquake-battered Colombian city yesterday despite the arrival of 3,000 army troops to maintain order.

Starving quake victims, including well-dressed housewives, old men and schoolchildren, stormed down city streets, shouting that they had seen none of the food pouring in from around the world.

Sturdy young men kicked the metal shutters of a downtown supermarket until they gave way. As word spread that troops were on their way, they threw food outside for the others to pick up.

People fought among themselves to grab anything they could find. Food was scattered across the street and the most desperate victims scooped up handfuls of rice.

When troops arrived, they were obviously confused and reluctant to shoot. "We're not going to shoot our own people. We're here for their security," said an unidentified army colonel. "These people are desperate. They need food."

The soldiers' reaction appeared to isolate President Andres Pastrana and local politicians, widely criticised for failing to distribute several hundred tons of food that have arrived since Moody's quake.

Slap in face for young blondes as over-40 wins TV bias case

BY MARY DEJEVSKY
in Washington

IF YOU have ever been infuriated by the formulaic TV news shows in the US, which pair a blandly handsome male of any age with a decidedly under-forties blonde, this verdict is for you. A court in Connecticut has awarded Janet Peckinpaugh, who is now very much the "wrong" side of 40 but still almost blonde, more than \$8m (£5m) in compensation after she was dropped as a \$200,000-plus-a-year news presenter.

The award, which is subject to appeal, is for lost earnings, hurt feelings and breach of contract. Within hours, the implications were reverberating through the glitzy world of American television, where one (female) executive defended the policy of pairing young



Peckinpaugh: Her grey matter did not count

women with mostly older men as mirroring "the man and woman in the audience".

Mrs Peckinpaugh had sued the WFSB network, which is an affiliate of CBS, on multiple counts of sex and age discrimination. She claimed that she had elected to remain at the sta-

tion in earlier years - turning down lucrative offers from national stations - because of assurances that she would be able to "grow grey" on the air. Unfortunately for Ms Peckinpaugh, this is not what happened. Her network turned out to be just like all of the others.

One day in 1994, she was called in to re-audition for her job, paired with a new male presenter. So were the two other female presenters. The tapes were shown to a "cross-section" of viewers, and Ms Peckinpaugh - the oldest of the three - came last. Her contract was not renewed, and she was reduced to an early-morning presenter's job at a much smaller station on 20 per cent of her previous pay.

One of Ms Peckinpaugh's complaints was that the station never even considered pairing two of the women presenters, so determined were they to keep the male-female pairing that pervades American TV. Almost the only time two female presenters are paired is on public holidays (when the men seem to get the day off) and on minor specialist stations, like the Weather Channel and Court TV. Even then, the male-female pairing is more usual.

Strictly speaking, the jury

found WFSB liable for discrimination on the basis of sex, not age, but the two were so closely bound together that it hardly mattered. The few women who survive on screen past their forties become interviewees or executives. The coveted role of news presenter goes to the men.

If he needs extra authority, he is paired with a bubbly or modest young woman.

IN BRIEF

Denmark's only Rembrandt stolen

TWO MEN overpowered an elderly security guard in Copenhagen and stole two paintings - one a Rembrandt - from an art gallery in Niva, 12 miles north of the Danish capital. The Rembrandt - *Portrait of a Lady* - dated 1652, was the only certified genuine work by the Dutch master in Denmark.

Life for killer who beheaded victim

A WHITE labourer in Independence, Virginia, convicted of burning a black man alive and beheading him, was jailed for life. Emmett Cressell, 38, apologised for the anguish suffered by the victim's family but said he was innocent.

Classes condemn homosexuality

SUNDAY SCHOOL lessons on how homosexuals can "change" will be offered for the first time to adults at US Southern Baptist churches tomorrow. They are aimed at condemning homosexuality but not homosexuals.

How to trap Cape Town bombers

SOUTH AFRICA'S Minister for Safety and Security, Sydney Mufamadi, vowed to end a wave of urban terror in Cape Town and catch bombers who injured 11 people in an explosion at the city's main police station on Thursday.

Levi's building in cancer scare

THE JEANS MAKER Levi Strauss has confirmed it abandoned part of its San Francisco HQ last October after seven workers developed breast cancer. The Saddleman building was declared safe after an inquiry.

£1,700 a week for EU 'fraud busters'

MEMBERS OF a committee investigating fraud, nepotism and mismanagement in the European Commission will not go unrewarded, sources revealed yesterday.

Each of the five-strong team will be offered £6,800 a month, plus allowances for travel and accommodation, with a daily allowance of £210 for staying in Brussels. A separate sum has been set aside for office space if necessary.

The proposed spending of more than £100,000 will come from European Union funds, split between the Parliament and the European Commission over fraud allegations.

Parliamentarians were deflected from their threat to sack the entire European Commission by the promise of the new investigation.

Yesterday the European Commission said it would waive the confidentiality rule for officials called by the committee.

Roy Perry, Conservative budgetary control committee spokesman, said: "This committee may be a fig leaf, and could be a very expensive fig leaf. It is strange for them to be paid by the month, rather than a one-off figure, or by results."

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A 'witch' is burnt in rural Pakistan

THE RAIN finally came to the Punjab last week. Two days of downpour turned its red dust to mud. The fields are now spotted with rust-coloured pools reflecting a heavy, grey sky.

The land is fertile, irrigated by the huge canal system built by the British. Thousands of villages, still known by the numbers the Raj administrators gave them, sit like islands in a sea of wheat, cotton and sugar cane. To the east lies the Cholistan desert, known locally as the walking sands.

Two weeks ago, in the village of Chak 100P, an old, mad woman was burnt alive. The incident barely made the local papers, let alone the national ones. But the story of Muradam Mai is the story of modern Pakistan.

How Muradam Mai died is simple. She burnt to death, screaming, while villagers poured petrol over her and lit it. Why she died is less

BY JASON BURKE
in Chak 100P, Punjab

straightforward. It is a mixture of Chaucer, Arthur Miller and Umberto Eco, touching madness and witchcraft, resurrecting Islam, sexism, racism and an administration rotten to the core.

Muradam Mai's nightmare began two years ago when, her family says, she started behaving "stupidly". Her moods swung from ranting anger to passivity. She also began disappearing for weeks at a time.

Last June, a doctor diagnosed her as paranoid schizophrenic and referred her to a hospital in Lahore, 300 miles to the north. The referral was a joke - her family could not even afford the bus fare, let alone medication. Her husband took another wife and her wanderings worsened.

At 8am on 8 January, Muradam Mai was found sitting in

Chak 100P's village shrine surrounded by burnt paper. The villagers say she had been burning pages from the shrine's Koran, the Muslim holy book.

A group of men dragged her to the village square. Her fingers were cut off and her eyes put out, probably with a stick.

Two men poured petrol over her and lit it. Other villagers then stoked the flames and tyres filled with kerosene were dropped over her. When the police arrived, around noon, Muradam Mai was very dead and a crowd of 70 gloating men stood around her corpse. "She

burnt the Koran, so we burnt her," they told officers.

As far as the police are concerned, the reasons for the murder are clear: "These people acted in a regrettable way but are strong Muslims. We have identified the suspects and they will be brought to book," promised Maqsood Ahmed, the local police chief.

The village elders agree that the case is straightforward. Chak 100P's headman, Ishfaq, said the woman died because the villagers "love Islam".

"It was the young men who did it," Ishfaq said. "Their re-

ligion is angrier than ours was at that age. But to burn the Koran is a terrible thing. I'm not saying what happened was good but such anger is difficult to contain."

However, it is not certain the paper Muradam Mai burnt was from the Koran at all. False allegations of Koran burning - a criminal act punishable by death under Pakistan's blasphemy laws - are a favourite ploy in family feuds or land disputes. They are also often made against ethnic or religious minorities. Last week neither the police nor the vil-

lage elders were able to produce the Koran Muradam Mai was supposed to have burnt.

Instead, according to some locals, Muradam Mai may actually have burnt only paper charms given her by local holy man - a "pir" - in the hope that her mental health would be restored. Such rituals are rarely remarked on. But Muradam Mai was already a target.

"This woman was an outcast. She was hated and feared for supposedly casting curses or, at the very least, bringing bad luck on the village," said Dr Aslam Naru, a local teacher.

The accusation of burning a Koran was an excuse for the lynching. It was a witch-hunt, like in Europe centuries ago."

According to Akram Bhatti, who owns much of the land around Chak 100P, there were other reasons for the animosity suffered by Muradam Mai. He says she had transgressed a number of basic codes: she was a single woman, wandering alone and not properly in "purdah" - the strict seclusion of women traditionally followed in rural Pakistan. She was mentally ill. And she was also

hut on one cause," he said.

In a society where the strong bully the weak and the weak prey on the even weaker, Muradam Mai's memory will last only as long as it takes the rain to wash a smudge of ash from the red Punjab soil.



Jason Burke

Muradam Mai's handprints on the wall of the shrine from where she was dragged and burnt to death in the Punjab village of Chak 100P (right)

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Religious gangs bring fear to Indonesia

BY DIARMUID O'SULLIVAN
in Jakarta

ON THE tropical Indonesian island of Amboina, people live in fear of Christian and Muslim gangs who have murdered as many as 200 people in a week. The violence is the latest of several riots and fears are growing that religious and racial tensions are reaching breaking point.

For the past week, people have been pulled from cars by gangs and stabbed. Murdered for having the wrong religion on their identity cards. Police say that at least 65 people have been killed, with another 62 in hospital. Unofficial totals go up to 200.

An uneasy lull has now set in, although there are daily reports of violence on nearby islands. Only a handful of shops are open. People leave their homes only to look for food.

In Ambon city, epicentre of the killing, soldiers armed with ageing rifles guard every street, but admit, privately, that they cannot stop the violence if it fares up again.

"It is quiet, but it's not under control. Violence could break out at any time. There's a feeling of vengeance because so many people died," says a Dutch journalist in Amboin, once a base for Holland's spice-trading empire.

Most Ambonese are Christians, and many of the victims were Muslim immigrants from the nearby island of Sulawesi.

Most of Indonesia's 200 million people are technically Muslim, though many are not devout. The country has a reputation for being more tolerant



An Amboinese man walks past houses cum-shops gutted in riots

in Ambon city, epicentre of the killing, soldiers armed with ageing rifles guard every street, but admit, privately, that they cannot stop the violence if it fares up again.

There have been smaller communal riots in recent weeks on other Indonesian islands, including Timor, Sulawesi and Sumatra. Seven people, most of them Ambonese gangsters, were butchered by Muslims in Jakarta in November. It isn't clear yet if revenge for these deaths is a factor in the violence. The police say that hoodlums from Jakarta may be involved, but the investigation is going on.

The violence in Indonesia is not as widespread as some foreign news reports suggest. Most areas of this vast archipelago are still peaceful. But the problems are likely to get worse.

The first free elections in 40 years are due to be held on 7 June, and many people fear bloodshed as more than a hundred parties jostle for support. An economic crisis has driven millions of people into poverty, and street crime is rising.

Many people say that elements of the old Suharto regime are stirring up the riots because they fear being called to account for misuse of power.

The former president is being investigated for corruption. He still has many loyalists in the army, the bureaucracy and the criminal underworld.

Akbaruddin Wando, an influential and outspoken Muslim leader, went to see Suharto on Wednesday night at his Jakarta mansion. "I asked him to use his influence to stop his followers from causing a commotion which could disrupt the elections, including the Ambon case and riots in other areas," he said. It was not clear what answer he got.

Much depends on what the armed forces do. The soldiers, divided and unpopular, have been unable to stop the riots. Their commander, General Wiranto, is both a cautious reformer and a protege of Suharto.

"I think we are nearing the point where Wiranto will have to make a break with his past and clamp down on Suharto's old guard," says Marzuki Darusman, who heads the government's human rights team.

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Misery engulfs millions as Africa seethes with more wars than ever

BY ALEX DUVAL SMITH

MORE COUNTRIES in sub-Saharan Africa are currently involved in wars than at any time in the 40 years that have passed since they began to gain independence.

It was easy, during the Cold War, to see Africa's crises in terms of East-West allegiances, with a suspicion of Francophone-Anglophone rivalry thrown in.

But now the causes of conflicts within and beyond the artificial borders traced by colonial powers are different and more base. Millions of Africans are displaced and thousands are dying in wars due to greed, a lust for power, ethnicity, and the poisonous combination of a brain-drain and widespread illiteracy.

Democratic elections seem to make little difference; registration or ballot-counting procedures are often shams.

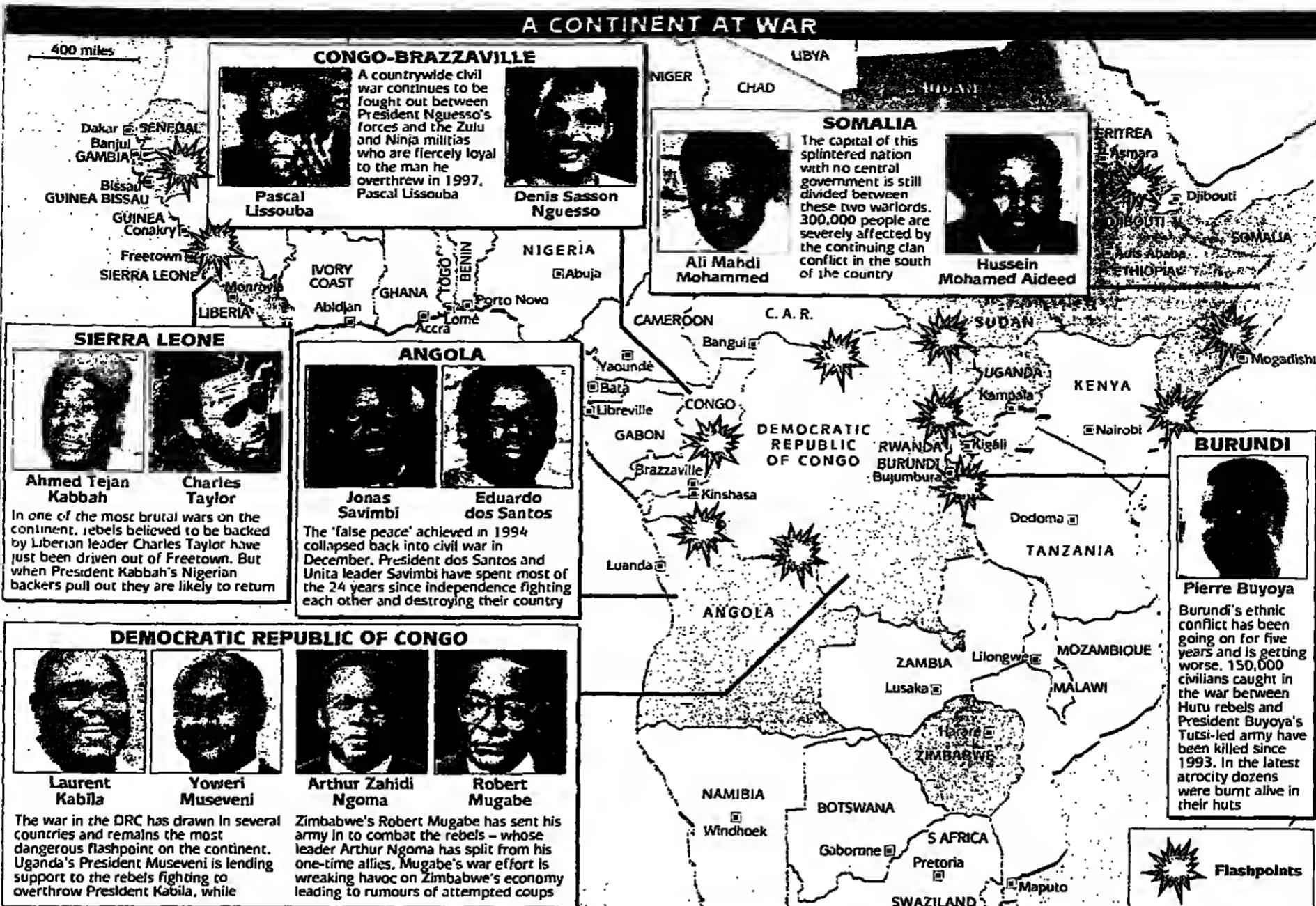
The West ponders international debt relief, because it pauperises people. But as one delayed passenger at Dakar said while he watched a stream of heads of state in private jets fly in for a summit: "We are delayed for them and the only thing the world's banks want to do is relieve them of their debt so they can buy more planes."

In Sierra Leone, from which the Nigerian-led Econog force may withdraw once it has secured the capital, Freetown, a weak, democratically elected government is threatened by army rebels and thugs who are backed by Charles Taylor, the Liberian president.

Mr Taylor, a warlord turned democrat, is paranoid about coups and greedy for Sierra Leone's diamonds. The small West African country has been at war, on and off, since its first democratic elections in 1990.

Burkina Faso has sent mercenaries to fight with the rebels in Sierra Leone. The forces resisting the Econog effort to seize President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah have links to rebels in Casamance, the southern Senegalese region that may have oil, and Guinea-Bissau which shares its ethnic make-up.

In the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia and Eritrea are once



again at daggers drawn over a border dispute between the Organisation of African Unity has failed to quell.

Eritrea's President, Isaias Afewerki, insists on a comprehensive redrawing of the colonial border but Ethiopia wants Eritrean troops to withdraw to a borderline that it breached in May last year.

Somalia has not had a government since 1991 when the former dictator, Mohammed Siad Barre, was overthrown after 21 years. Ethnic warlords have since carved up the country. At least 100,000 people have died and the United Nations has given up on the region.

In Sudan, John Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Army launched an attack in 1983 against the Islamic government, seeking autonomy for African Christians and animists in the south. The latest truce is about to expire and no plan exists for a referendum on a north-south division of the country.

In Congo-Brazzaville, fighting resumed this week between the Cobras, soldiers loyal to General Denis Sasson Nguesso, who came to power 18 months ago, and his Ninja challengers - militias loyal to former leader Pascal Lissouba. The fighting is not linked to the war in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo.

The wars involving Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola have become interlinked. The reason is that the DRC leader, Laurent Desire Kabila - who overthrew Mobutu Sese Seko two years ago - and his enemies have used old rivalries and new fears for their own ends. Mr Kabila has Angola, Zim-

babwe and Namibia on his side against rebels - backed by the other neighbouring countries - who believe he is mismanaging DRC, a country the size of Western Europe.

Mr Kabila ousted Mobutu with the help of the country's ethnic Tutsi and their cousins from Rwanda. But last August, feeling threatened by them, he

ousted all Tutsis from positions of power in the capital, Kinshasa. The conflict has rekindled Hutu-Tutsi hatred; in Burundi this week, 185 people were killed in a Hutu area.

Zimbabwe, whose President Robert Mugabe supports President Kabila, is bordering on chaos, with rumours of a military coup.

In Angola, the government of Jose Eduardo Dos Santos this week conceded that it had lost Mbanza gateway to the oil town of Soyo, to rebels from Unita - the rebel movement led by Jonas Savimbi, which controls much of the east of the country and its diamonds.

For more than 20 years, Unita was backed by South Africa and the US against the Soviet-supported MPLA, now in government. Two weeks ago, the United Nations said it would pull out of the war-torn country, sparking fears of a forthcoming humanitarian disaster when aid cannot safely be delivered to the population.

Ghosts of the Cold War, diamonds, oil, colonial boundaries, arms dealing and ethnicity seem all to fuel Africa's disasters. But there are success stories in Africa, too. At any given time, out of the continent's 600 million-odd people, the majority are at peace.

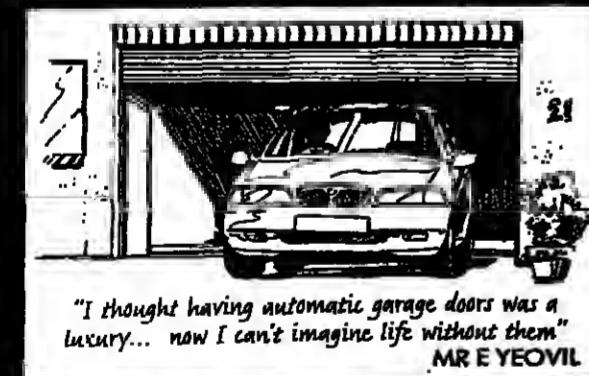
Former French colonies, though poor, have achieved a measure of economic stability through the CFA franc - tied to the French franc despite a devaluation in 1997.

South Africa will have elections later this year and Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, is apparently dismantling military control. Uganda is winning the war against AIDS.

Next week, President Nelson Mandela of South Africa will deliver his last state of the nation address before handing over to Thabo Mbeki.

There are doubts over Mbeki's vision for the future but he has made what he calls the "African Renaissance" a centrepiece of it. The concept of a renaissance may be European, but it is all Africa has. And it may just result in a solution to the continent's problems.

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Jordan's heir is courted by all

FROM ACROSS the Middle East, there has come an intriguing – not to say astonishing – chorus of approval for Crown Prince Abdullah of Jordan. In the pages of *Babel* – produced by the one editor you would never contradict, Saddam Hussein's son Oudai, readers have been told Abdullah's appointment is “one of the King's most intelligent political decisions since the start of the Sixties”.

In the Gulf, the United States Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, talked of King Hussein's

BY ROBERT FISK
in Beirut

“magnificent job” in arranging for his succession.

In Jerusalem, a former Israeli defence ministry official, Alon Pinkas, said Abdullah was an “excellent student” in America. Mr Pinkas should know: he taught Jordan's future king at Georgetown University.

But when Saddam Hussein, Madeleine Albright and the Israelis all sing the same tune, something has to be wrong. If the Israelis were prepared to

send a killer squad to Amman to assassinate a Palestinian leader after the peace treaty with Jordan, why should they be any more prepared to respect the integrity of Abdullah's kingdom?

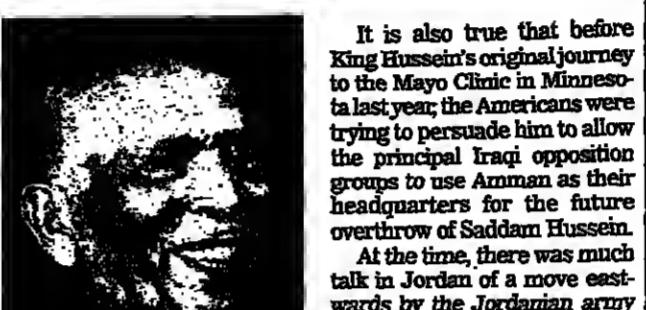
Indeed, one of the first meetings that the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, held to discuss Abdullah's succession included Ephraim Halevy, head of the Mossad intelligence service. Israeli officials were quoted as saying they would be behind the Crown Prince “in the short term”.

And if Saddam Hussein was prepared to send his killer squads to knock off the Iraqi opposition in Amman, why should his son suddenly wish to improve relations with the Hashemite dynasty that gave political asylum to President Saddam's son-in-laws? Could it be that the Iraqis have suddenly remembered King Hussein's former friendship with Saddam? Or are they anxious to ensure Abdullah does not allow the United States to use Amman as a base to overthrow Saddam's regime?

Closer study of Mrs Albright's tribute shows she hoped the transition to Abdullah was “one that does not cause problems”.

What sort of problems, one wonders, was she expecting? Resistance to his leadership from Palestinian Jordanians? Or resistance by Crown Prince Abdullah to pressure from Washington? It is one thing to be a “friend” of America – another to be obedient to the wishes of an American president. What if Abdullah shows as much independence of spirit as his father did in 1991, when he refused to support the West's military campaign against Iraq?

There is, in fact, a disturbing irony in the fact that while British aircraft fly the skies of Iraq's “no-fly” zones, a half-British prince is preparing to rule Iraq's closest Arab neighbour. The colonial history of Jordan can only be re-emphasised by Abdullah's succession. It is not just his English accent



King Hussein of Jordan

– after all, the British put his grandfather on the throne, propped up his father with military leaders (until King Hussein grew tired of them) and can now claim a half-share in the next king's blood-line. It's as well for the Palestinians of Jordan – perhaps 65 per cent of the country – that Abdullah's wife, Rania al-Yassine, is Palestinian.

Most Arabs, it should be said, have accepted the new crown prince's appointment, not with enthusiasm but with the kind of weariness born of knowing that they will never have a say in the appointment of their leaders (and only occasionally in their overthrow). “America decided it should be Abdullah,” one of Lebanon's more cynical politicians said yesterday. “Without Washington's approval, he would never have been appointed.”

Of course it is true that American fighter-bombers are based – albeit with less publicity than in the Gulf – on at least one big Jordanian airstrip. It is not just his English accent

It is also true that before King Hussein's original journey to the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota last year the Americans were trying to persuade him to allow the principal Iraqi opposition groups to use Amman as their headquarters for the future overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

At the time, there was much talk in Jordan of a move eastwards by the Jordanian army into the Iraqi desert, where the Jordanians (sponsored by the Americans) would set up a “sanctuary” to which Saddam's dissident legions would supposedly flock before setting out on a crusade to destroy the Iraqi tyrant.

Crown Prince Abdullah knows all about dissent – and how to suppress it. His special forces units were used to quell riots in several Jordanian towns last year. Is he then the man the Americans might now choose to open up a corridor into Iraq?

No wonder *Babel* lavished praise on Abdullah's appointment. This is not the time for Saddam Hussein's son to offend the son of King Hussein.

And no wonder Mr Netanyahu – while claiming to pray for the “miracle” of King Hussein's return to health – described his country's peace with Jordan as “one of the cornerstones of Israel's national security”.

He knew when King Hussein's anger would break – Netanyahu was lucky to get his would-be assassins back from Jordan without a show-trial in Amman – but cannot guess when Abdullah's patience might become exhausted.

Model's body is found in swamp

BY THEODORA TONGAS
in Athens

THE GREEK boyfriend of a slain American model, 31-year-old Julie Scully, was arraigned on Thursday on charges of pre-meditated murder after he had led police to Scully's body, which was retrieved from a swamp near the northern city of Kavala.

George Skidopoulos, 24, has confessed to strangling Scully on 8 January, then burning her remains before hacking off her head. He stuffed the body inside a suitcase and threw her head into the sea.

He had tried once before to kill her, but was stopped by his family, an investigator claimed yesterday. His claim came as medical examiners conducted an autopsy on the charred and headless remains of Scully.

“A violent suffocation, which at this time I cannot confirm was a strangulation,” said coroner Filimos Koutsafis of the cause of death. He added some uncertainty remained about the strangulation because her neck was severed.

Private investigator John Kouvias, hired by Scully's family, alleged Skidopoulos had also tried to choke her at the end of last year, but was stopped by his mother. It was the second reported choking incident involving Skidopoulos and members of Scully's family. While visiting Mansfield last summer, Skidopoulos allegedly choked Scully's mother during an argument, and police charged him with simple assault. He was barred from contact with her and allowed to return to Greece.

Scully went to Greece with plans to marry Skidopoulos, a petty officer aboard a cruise ship whom she met on a Caribbean trip while still married. But she had a change of heart and told her boyfriend she was returning home to New Jersey because she missed her three-year-old daughter.

According to police, that caused Skidopoulos to fly into a rage and strangle Scully, known in New Jersey as a bikini-clad “Page Six Girl” for the tabloid *Trentonian*. Skidopoulos later concocted a story about how she disappeared in central Athens and began a search to find her. (AP)

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£50,000	- £99,999	5.45%	4.36%	5.20% 4.16%
£25,000	- £49,999	5.05%	4.04%	4.80% 3.84%
£10,000	- £24,999	4.55%	3.64%	4.30% 3.44%
£5,000	- £9,999	4.05%	3.24%	3.80% 3.04%
£500	- £4,999	3.55%	2.84%	3.30% 2.64%
Dunfermline Gold	CURRENT	CURRENT	FROM 1 FEB '99	FROM 1 FEB '99
£50,000+	4.80%	3.84%	4.55%	3.64%
£25,000	- £49,999	4.45%	3.56%	4.20% 3.36%
£10,000	- £24,999	3.70%	2.96%	3.45% 2.76%
£5,000	- £9,999	3.35%	2.68%	3.10% 2.48%
£2,500	- £4,999	3.10%	2.48%	2.85% 2.28%
£500	- £2,999	2.80%	2.24%	2.55% 2.04%
£100	- £499	0.75%	0.60%	0.75% 0.60%
HeadStart Account (for young savers)	CURRENT	CURRENT	FROM 1 FEB '99	FROM 1 FEB '99
£1 or more	3.25%	2.60%	3.00%	2.40%
#PREMIUM PLUS	CURRENT	CURRENT	FROM 1 FEB '99	FROM 1 FEB '99
Bonus interest of 1.00% gross p.a. paid if no more than one withdrawal of less than £10,000 is made each year and the balance of the account does not fall below £2,500.	3.25%	2.60%	3.00%	2.40%
INTEREST PAYMENT	CURRENT	CURRENT	FROM 1 FEB '99	FROM 1 FEB '99
Where interest on the Premium Shares Account or Dunfermline Direct is payable other than annually the above rates are reduced by 0.50% gross. On Premium Plus Issue 3 the above rates are reduced by 0.25% gross.	3.25%	2.60%	3.00%	2.40%
Dunfermline TESSA (Third, Fourth and Fifth Issues - closed)	CURRENT	CURRENT	FROM 1 FEB '99	FROM 1 FEB '99
£3,000+	6.85%		6.60%	
£100	- £2,999	5.85%	5.60%	
OTHER INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS	CURRENT	CURRENT	FROM 1 FEB '99	FROM 1 FEB '99
	Gross Rates*/	NET RATES**	Gross Rates*/	NET RATES**
	Gross AER***	Gross AER***	Gross AER***	Gross AER***
Children's Bond	7.50%	6.00%	7.25%	5.80%
Portfolio Account	6.35%	5.08%	6.10%	4.85%
Priority ISA	£7,000+	5.50%	4.40%	5.25% 4.20%
	£100-£6,999	6.25%	5.00%	6.00% 4.80%
Millennium Tracker Bond (Closed Issue)	6.80%	5.44%	6.50%	5.20%
CURRENT	CURRENT	CURRENT	FROM 1 FEB '99	FROM 1 FEB '99
Gross Rates*	Net Rates**	Gross AER***	Gross Rates*	Net Rates**
				Gross AER***
Bank Rate Plus (Closed Issue)	6.50%	5.20%	6.70%	6.25% 5.00% 6.43%

The rates of interest payable on Treasures' Deposits and Special Deposits for Charities and Exempt Pension Funds match Dunfermline Gold. Dunfermline ScotGold rates for individuals not ordinarily resident in the UK are available on application. Details of interest rates for all other investment accounts (including other closed issues and fixed rates) are available from branch offices. Dunfermline Direct transactions are by post from the Society's Head Office.

* Gross interest means the rate of interest payable before the deduction of income tax at the rate specified by law (“the specified rate”). The current specified rate for basic rate tax payers is 20%. Please note you may be liable to pay tax at a higher rate depending on your tax position. ** Net interest is the rate of interest which would be payable after deduction of income tax at the specified rate. *** AER stands for Annual Equivalent Rate and illustrates what the interest rate would be if interest was paid and added each year. **** Tax free interest is the rate of interest payable where interest is exempt from income tax. Where the tax deducted exceeds an investor's tax liability (if any) a claim may be made to the Inland Revenue for repayment of tax. For details and a registration form for payment of interest gross, please see Inland Revenue leaflet IR110. Current interest rates are available from our 24 hour rate line tel: 01383 627780 and on our web site address below.

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Crown Prince Abdullah (left) is congratulated in Amman on his appointment by Abdulkarim Arifi, leader of the Islamic Action Front. Reuters

JOHN GREENGRASS, Britain's consul in Delhi, has not exported any elephants in the past seven days, nor lit any funeral pyres, but the week has had its usual share of unpredictable distractions.

Monday was meant to be a day of rest, but he came in to cover for a sick colleague. Before long, four different crises had erupted around him. First, his office was occupied by a sobbing woman whose marriage to an Indian had broken down, and who could not think of anywhere else to go for advice. She was still there, still distraught, when an equally upset young man turned up. He said he had been lured into a grimy quarter of the city and poisoned with mind-altering drugs administered in a rum and Coke. The plan, he believed, had been to knock him out then steal his possessions. But, dazed and staggering, he managed to escape in an autorickshaw taxi, and came straight round to the High Commission, still hallucinating. Mr Greengrass parked him in the corridor, he has a list of solicitors or marriage counsellors – the honorary consul and the hallucinating tourist had somehow got into a surreal argument in the corridor and Mr Greengrass had to pull them apart before they smacked each other.

JOHN GREENGRASS wears a shirt of constabulary blue, has thinning hair and a bushy moustache, and in every other respect is about as ordinary-looking an Englishman as you could hope to find east of Suez. Several times every month he sallies forth from the sanitised surroundings of the High Commission in Delhi to visit some of the most terrible places in Asia. There are eight British prisoners in Tihar jail in Delhi, which is the biggest in India and, according to Mr Greengrass, “probably the worst.”

Mr Greengrass's challenge now was to persuade the police to drop the case so the boys could go home.

“The women

Model's body is found in swamp

By THE ODORAS TONGAS

THE INDEPENDENT
Saturday 30 January 1999Business & City Editor, Jeremy Warner
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BRIEFING

Russian failure hits BP Amoco

SHARES IN BP Amoco fell yesterday when Sidanko, a Russian oil producer in which BP has a 10 per cent share, said it faced bankruptcy proceedings. Sidanko, Russia's sixth-largest oil producer, is being sued by a creditor company, Beta-Eko, for unpaid debts. The company, which was hard hit by the slump in oil prices, has struggled to pay off its debts because of oil export restrictions imposed by the Russian government.

A spokesman for BP Amoco, which bought its stake to access the Kovyktka field in eastern Siberia, said the company was still viable in the long term. BP Amoco shares fell 14p on a rising market to close at 825p.

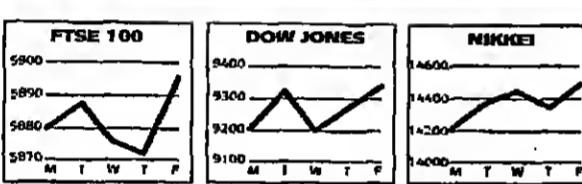
Marston denounces Wolves

 MARSTON THOMPSON & Evereshed, the regional brewer embroiled in a bitter bid battle with Wolverhampton & Dudley, issued its final defence document yesterday denouncing its rival's strategy as "inefficient" and "backward." Marston, chaired by Michael Hurdle (pictured), has responded to Wolves' £285m bid with a £317m counter-offer. It urged its shareholders to "ignore W&D's empty rhetoric, look at the grim reality of their record." However, the group failed to increase its own offer, leaving shareholders to decide between the two strategies.

BMW denies chief is under threat

THE QUANDT family which controls German carmaker BMW yesterday denied reports that Bernd Pischetsrieder, chief executive of the company, was under pressure to quit because of the poor performance of Rover, its British subsidiary. The reports surfaced as Mr Pischetsrieder explained in his annual letter to shareholders why Rover sustained losses last year estimated at up to DM1bn (£360m). He said that Rover's competitive position had deteriorated.

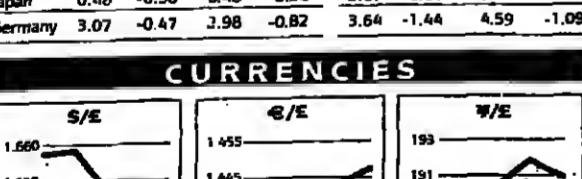
STOCK MARKETS



INDICES						
Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	5896.00	-23.50	-0.40	6195.60	4599.20	2.74
FTSE 350	5024.20	65.30	1.32	5970.90	4247.60	3.28
FTSE 350 All Share	2792.40	15.10	0.54	2969.10	2210.40	2.82
FTSE All Share	2695.94	14.80	0.55	2886.52	2143.53	2.87
FTSE SmallCap	2111.20	16.10	0.78	2793.80	1834.40	3.80
FTSE Fledgling	1188.20	4.70	0.40	1517.10	1046.20	4.56
FTSE AIM	834.90	4.00	0.48	1146.70	761.30	1.19
FTSE Eurotop 100	2786.59	16.37	0.59	3073.21	2018.15	2.13
FTSE Eurotop 300	1214.89	7.11	0.59	1332.07	888.63	1.99
Dow Jones	9343.38	56.64	0.61	9647.96	7400.30	1.64
Nikkei	14249.25	156.93	1.09	17852.90	12761.90	1.90
Hang Seng	9506.90	145.94	1.56	11926.16	6544.75	3.70
Dax	5159.96	63.55	1.25	6217.83	3893.71	1.67
S&P 500	1272.02	6.30	0.50	1278.05	923.32	1.25
Nasdaq	2494.86	16.90	0.68	2477.47	1357.09	0.27
Toronto 300	6690.90	22.25	0.33	7837.70	5320.90	1.59
Brazil Bovespa	8512.86	258.80	3.01	12395.14	4575.67	2.88
Belgium BEL20	3411.59	5.68	0.17	3713.27	2569.46	1.08
Asterdam EEX	532.09	5.69	1.26	500.65	450.00	1.08
France CAC 40	4251.80	52.73	1.24	4461.94	2881.31	1.90
Milan MIB 20	34672.00	226.90	0.63	35170.00	24715.00	1.18
Madrid Ibex 35	9878.00	46.80	0.47	10599.00	6469.00	1.98
Irish Overall	5180.00	-4.70	-0.09	5281.70	3732.57	1.45
Korea Comp	571.43	0.04	-0.01	651.95	277.31	1.04
Australia ASX	2693.80	16.60	0.58	2902.90	2386.70	3.17



MONEY MARKET RATES						
Index	3 month	Yr chg	1 Year	Yr chg	10 year	Yr chg
UK	5.82	-1.75	5.50	-2.00	4.11	-1.95
US	4.97	-0.68	5.06	-0.66	4.70	0.86
Japan	0.48	-0.50	0.48	-0.26	2.07	0.01
Germany	3.07	-0.47	3.98	-0.82	3.64	-1.44
Australia ASX	2693.80	16.60	0.58	2902.90	2386.70	3.17



CURRENCIES						
Index	S/E	G/E	W/E	W/E	W/E	W/E
S/£	1.660	1.455	193	191	187	187
Euro	1.650	1.445	193	191	187	187
Yen	1.640	1.435	187	187	187	187
Dollar	1.630	1.425	187	187	187	187

OTHER INDICATORS						
Index	Close	Chg	Yr Ago	Index	Chg	Yr Ago
Brent Oil (\$)	11.09	-0.03	16.23	GDP	115.40	3.00
Gold (\$)	286.25	3.00	302.35	RPI	164.40	2.80
Silver (\$)	5.24	0.15	6.16	Base Rates	6.00	7.25
				Off \$/pt		

SOURCE BLOOMBERG

www.bloomberg.com/uk

TOURIST RATES

Australia (\$)	2.5106	Mexican (nuevo peso)	15.21
Austria (schillings)	19.21	Netherlands (guilders)	3.0765
Belgium (francs)	56.42	New Zealand (\$)	2.9268
Canada (\$)	2.4098	Norway (kroner)	12.02
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8094	Portugal (escudos)	278.73
Denmark (krone)	10.48	Saudi Arabia (rials)	5.9899
Finland (markka)	8.3785	Singapore (\$)	2.6532
France (francs)	9.1771	Spain (pesetas)	232.42
Germany (marks)	2.7459	Sweden (koron)	12.49
Greece (drachma)	450.00	Switzerland (francs)	2.2608
Hong Kong (\$)	12.28	Thailand (bahts)	55.72
Ireland (pounds)	1.0994	Turkey (lira)	522573
Indian (rupees)	62.73	USA (\$)	1.5978
Israel (shekels)	6.2288		
Italy (lira)	2719		
Japan (yen)	185.95		
Malaysia (ringgit)	5.9908		
Malta (lira)	0.6075		

Source Thomas Cook

Rates for indication purposes only

www.bloomberg.com/uk

TOURIST RATES

BUSINESS

BT gets go-ahead to bid for Securicor's Cellnet stake

BRITISH TELECOM yesterday received the Government's go-ahead to take full control of Cellnet, the mobile phone operator in which Securicor has a minority stake, in a deal which could be worth up to £2bn.

The Department of Trade and Industry said it would lift a restriction preventing BT from increasing its 60 per cent holding in Cellnet, the country's second-largest mobile phone company. The DTI said it would be allowed to bid for the new "third generation" of hi-tech mobile phone licenses to be auctioned in the summer.

BT said it had "no immediate plans" to bid for Securicor's 40 per cent stake, but industry experts said the DTI's decision opened the way for a tough round of negotiations over the sale. Securicor said it was not in

talks with BT, but added that it was "prepared to consider" the sale of the stake "at a price that fully reflects the value of the investment in its shareholders".

City analysts predicted that the two companies would be locked in a lengthy battle over the price of the stake, which Securicor acquired for just £1m in 1983.

James Ross at ABN Amro said Cellnet, which has 4 million subscribers and is second only to Vodafone in the fast-growing

UK mobile market, could be worth up to £12bn. That would make Securicor's stake worth around £4.8bn, although BT is expected to push the price down as it is the only credible buyer.

The lifting of the ownership ban sparked a rally in Securicor shares. The stock soared 12 per cent in early trade before ending 7 per cent up at £31.25p on expectations that the security firm would net a large profit on the sale. BT rose 3.5p to £90.5p.

Industry experts said, although its 60 per cent stake gives BT management control

of Cellnet, chief executive Sir Peter Bonfield would like to have full ownership of the business. They said it needed to strike a deal to respond to the competitive threat posed by the merger between Vodafone and Airtouch of the US.

Some experts believe BT will use yesterday's clearance to bid for third-generation mobile licenses - known as UMTS - as a bargaining chip over Cellnet.

The decision effectively enables BT to choose whether to bid for the new hi-tech franchises, which would allow it to feed Internet

52 week		52 week		52 week		52 week	
High	Low	Stock	Price	Clg	Yld	P/E	Code
CAUCASIAN BEVERAGES							
145	142	167 Heublein	115.00	0.02	9.0	23.9	107
CHAMBERS LTD							
163	155	168 Alford Develop	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	100
145	132	172 British Ind	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	101
125	115	173 Burdett Ind	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	102
105	95	174 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	103
120	110	175 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	104
110	100	176 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	105
125	115	177 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	106
110	100	178 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	107
110	100	179 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	108
110	100	180 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	109
110	100	181 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	110
110	100	182 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	111
110	100	183 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	112
110	100	184 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	113
110	100	185 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	114
110	100	186 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	115
110	100	187 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	116
110	100	188 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	117
110	100	189 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	118
110	100	190 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	119
110	100	191 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	120
110	100	192 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	121
110	100	193 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	122
110	100	194 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	123
110	100	195 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	124
110	100	196 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	125
110	100	197 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	126
110	100	198 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	127
110	100	199 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	128
110	100	200 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	129
110	100	201 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	130
110	100	202 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	131
110	100	203 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	132
110	100	204 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	133
110	100	205 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	134
110	100	206 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	135
110	100	207 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	136
110	100	208 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	137
110	100	209 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	138
110	100	210 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	139
110	100	211 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	140
110	100	212 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	141
110	100	213 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	142
110	100	214 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	143
110	100	215 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	144
110	100	216 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	145
110	100	217 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	146
110	100	218 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	147
110	100	219 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	148
110	100	220 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	149
110	100	221 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	150
110	100	222 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	151
110	100	223 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	152
110	100	224 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	153
110	100	225 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	154
110	100	226 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	155
110	100	227 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	156
110	100	228 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	157
110	100	229 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	158
110	100	230 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	159
110	100	231 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	160
110	100	232 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	161
110	100	233 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	162
110	100	234 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	163
110	100	235 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	164
110	100	236 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	165
110	100	237 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	166
110	100	238 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	167
110	100	239 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	168
110	100	240 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	169
110	100	241 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	170
110	100	242 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	171
110	100	243 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	172
110	100	244 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	173
110	100	245 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	174
110	100	246 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	175
110	100	247 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	176
110	100	248 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	177
110	100	249 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	178
110	100	250 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	179
110	100	251 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	180
110	100	252 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	181
110	100	253 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	182
110	100	254 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	183
110	100	255 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	184
110	100	256 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	185
110	100	257 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	186
110	100	258 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	187
110	100	259 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	188
110	100	260 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.98	189
110	100	261 Cawdron	100.00	0.04	6.8	7.	

Good reasons for US to be cheerful

IN RECENT YEARS there has been a consistent theme running like a thread through the annual meetings of the World Economic Forum. Amid the analysis of European Monetary Union, globalisation, the advance of the Internet into all areas of business and the emerging markets crisis, there has also been a growing air of American triumphalism.

And with good reason. After seven years of uninterrupted low inflation, the US economy is still booming. Its technology leads the world, its entrepreneurs have galvanised business across the globe with their invention and energy, unemployment is at a record low and Americans as a whole are now more wealthy than ever.

However, this time round there is a quite tangible change of mood. Plainly, the Americans themselves are as gung ho as ever. But virtually everyone else I have talked to here this year, with few exceptions, thinks the American economy stands at an exceptionally difficult and dangerous crossroads. Few are prepared to defend US stock price valuations at their present levels, and many believe Wall Street has become a financial bubble comparable in size and scope to

JEREMY WARNER



IN DAVOS, SWITZERLAND

that which engulfed Japan in the late 1980s. Even among the most optimistic, there is anxiety. Among the pessimistic, there is real fear.

It is hard to argue against these concerns. They are well founded. The US has a huge and growing trade deficit. In a world beset by recession and sluggish growth, the US economy has become the only dynamo of any significance. To achieve this, American consumers have been spending like there is no tomorrow. In so doing, they have been supporting the rest of the world. Without the US, the position

in Japan, the rest of Asia and Brazil – already bad enough – would be even worse.

This spending binge has been supported by a buoyant stock market, which has made Americans feel much wealthier than they perhaps really are. However, the money to support such spending has to come from somewhere. The truth of the matter is that it is being financed by ever higher borrowing, much of it from the rest of the world.

For how much longer can this merry-go-round be sustained? Not much longer seems to be the general view here, although naturally you don't hear it from American policy makers. Were it not for the deflationary recession in parts of the rest of the world, US interest rates would already be rising steeply to choke off the inflationary effects of the boom, many believe.

As it is, Alan Greenspan is risking his reputation as he works out his remaining years as chairman of the Federal Reserve by keeping an ultimately doomed boom alive. The longer it goes on, the more severe and damaging will be the fallout when it ends, it is argued.

So far, however, nothing has managed to puncture the bubble. The Russian meltdown tried its



damnedest, and for a while it looked as if the near collapse of Long-Term Capital Management might deliver the goods. Even Brazil has so far failed to shake confidence on Wall Street fundamentally. Stock prices have defied the doomsayers. By rights, the dollar too ought to be falling by an order of magnitude to compensate for the trade deficit. It has not.

So is this going to be the year when things go pear-shaped? That's what many are saying here.

What puzzles me, however, is that if so many professional pundits and economists think Wall Street is heading for a serious fall, why has it not already done so?

One possible reason is that private investors in the US have been taught by experience that it pays to buy on the dips. Every time there is a setback they wade back in, believing that bargains like these

won't be on offer for long. But it is also because the Federal Reserve has acted to buy their confidence by cutting interest rates, and when LTCM threatened general systemic damage to financial markets, organising a rescue.

According to the bears – and many supposed experts here seem to be of that persuasion – this is only delaying the final reckoning. I'm not convinced by any of this, plausible though it seems. Just think back to the way the world looked from Davos this time last year. Who then would have predicted that industrial production in South Korea would within 12 months be virtually back to pre-crisis levels? How many people then would have expected monetary union in Europe to get rid of an entirely glitch-free start? Who would have predicted that the American boom would continue unabated into the final quarter of the year? And finally, how many forecasters outside the US would have had the Dow still riding high at 9,300?

On the other side of the coin, of course, hardly anyone would have thought the scale of the disintegration in Russia possible. Most of us would have expected Japan to be in slightly better shape by now

than it is. Although many predicted a crash, few could have foreseen the degree of strain the world financial system was subjected to, or the volatility we now accept as a way of life.

Even so, I think many of those who observe events from outside the US are missing something here. There is no rule of economics that says business cycles must have only a certain finite length. In recent history, business cycles have not so much died of old age as been murdered by the anti-inflationary policies of the Federal Reserve. Outside stock prices, there is very little sign of inflationary pressure, either in the US or elsewhere in the world. Meanwhile, the Federal government has during the good years recharged its fiscal camion in a way that gives unprecedented scope for inflationary policy if and when the time demands it.

There is something else that tends to be forgotten in constantly comparing Wall Street now to the Tokyo market of a decade ago. The US government has no target for the stock market, and other than the general prosperity of its people, it has no interest in maintaining it at inflated levels. On the whole, it doesn't engage in market manipu-

lation, as the government did in Japan, and there is no systemic reason why the market needs to be kept high. By contrast with Japan, American business and markets are highly transparent, and the US government rightly attempts to promote private sector enterprise by simply not getting in the way.

The upshot is that there has rarely been a better time to be in business in the US, nor has the opportunity for new business development ever been as great. Whole industries and markets are being radically reordered by the electronic revolution. For the first time companies and individuals can, through the Internet, have a global presence without the need for a global footprint; without the huge paraphernalia of worldwide distribution and marketing which has traditionally maintained global organisations.

American entrepreneurs and wealth creators have seized the opportunity presented by these changes as no others. This is why Wall Street is high. Is it too high? Almost certainly. Will it burst any time soon? Probably not. Even if it does, will the US economy keep up the high-growth momentum of recent years? Yes, of course it will.

IN BRIEF

Hopes raised for Vaux buyout

VAUX, the Sunderland pub group planning to sell its two breweries and 350 tenanted pubs to concentrate on Swallow hotels, yesterday agreed to grant a four-week exclusivity deal to a management buyout team led by Frank Nicholson, the younger brother of Vaux's chairman Sir Paul Nicholson. It raises hopes that the management team – which is committed to keeping open both the Sunderland brewery and the Ward's brewery in Sheffield – will clinch the deal, which could be worth over £80m. Vaux profits in the first 16 weeks of the current year are almost 5 per cent ahead of last year but below target, the AGM was told.

Diageo sells

DIAGEO'S Pillsbury unit is selling six non-strategic brands to US company B&G Foods for \$192m, including Underwood meat spreads, B&M baked beans and Joan of Arc canned beans. A buyer is still being sought for Pet Evaporated Milk, which was put up for sales at the same time last July.

Boots in Holland
BOOTS THE Chemists is to spend £49m opening a further 45 stores in Holland. Boots has been testing five healthy and beauty stores in Holland for 18 months. Boots also plans to extend its chain of stores in Thailand from 19 to 50 by the end of this year and move into Japan later this year.

Rank job

RANK GROUP, the struggling Butlins-to-bingo leisure company, has found a replacement for Andrew Teare, who resigned as chief executive three months ago. Mike Smith, chief executive of Ladbrokes' betting and gaming division, will take up the position in April. Mr Smith, 52, has been at Ladbrokes since 1984. Rank shares fell 7.5p to 200p.

Nokia profits up

PRE-TAX profits at Nokia surged 74 per cent last year, to 14.6bn markka (\$2.8bn), while sales jumped a record 51 per cent to 79.2bn markka – leaving it in position to become the world's number one mobile phone maker, the Finnish group said yesterday. Nokia's results outstripped those of its two key rivals – Motorola, whose 1998 sales eased, and Ericsson, which posted 10 per cent sales growth on Thursday.



The Lucas wiring factory at Ystradgynlais in the Swansea Valley yesterday, where 750 jobs are to be axed. **LucasVarty**

David Roberts/Dragon

Small caps frolic in the spotlight

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

desires, buy full control of Cellnet. BT firmed 3.5p to 930.5p.

Mike Smith was given a muted reception as chief executive of struggling Rank leisure group; the shares fell 7.5p to 200p.

WPP, the advertising group, rose 27p to 458.5p on the theory that it had been left behind in the recent media surge.

Diageo's \$192m food sale produced a 35p gain to 672p. Banks were higher, with Barclays up 61p to 1,360p.

ICI – year's results next week – put on 18p to 543p and the shares can start to head back towards their 819.5p peak. Engineers, spurred by the rush of takeover activity, moved ahead with Bodycote up 62.5p to 850p and Senior Engineering, which met analysts on Thursday, 6p to 121.5p. CSFB reckon it is worth 140p a share.

Takeover speculation lifted

Brands Hatch, the motor racing group, 8p to 173.5p and Regent Inns 16.5p to 169p. Hockwold, the building materials group, rose 9p to 148.5p with HSBC suggesting the shares were 25 per cent undervalued.

Footsie ended 23.5 points higher at 5,896. It swung between a 69.2 gain and a 40.5 fall, with New York's behaviour the dominating influence in the afternoon. Trading was heavy, with turnover above 1.1 billion shares.

Securicor was the most wanted Footsie constituent, gaining 42.5p to 631.25p as the market prepared for BT to ring the changes at the Cellnet mobile phone group. BT, with 60 per cent of Cellnet, has been anxious to buy Securicor's 40 per cent interest but has been thwarted by Westminster.

Now the Department of Trade & Industry has given BT more flexibility to compete in the mobile phone market. It is to be allowed to bid in the next licensing round and, if it

the market has put on their

companies, have mounted management buyouts. They believe they know their companies – and their value – better than the market and have been prepared, by borrowing and enlisting the help of venture capitalists, to let their money do the talking. Other undercard companies have used share buybacks to illustrate the belief that the market has it wrong.

Although such corporate activity has been going on for a long while, it is only this year, when the smaller fry have outperformed blue chips, that the message seems to have filtered through to investors.

There are even signs that some institutional investors, which have ignored the undercard, are relenting and starting to pick up stock.

Hard pressed sports retailer JJB Sports, led the smaller-cap march. The shares

jumped 52.5p to 362.5p on the

news that it had been awarded a contract to supply the

new stadium at Wembley.

Builders were helped by Bryant's figures on Thursday and upbeat comments from Ward. Persimmon rose 14p to 182p and Bellway 16p at 265.5p. Ward was 3.5p higher at 31.5p.

Langdon Foods, planning to raise cash through a share placing, was unchanged at 15p.

Some Internet shares were given a further upwards whirr.

Freepages, linking up with Flextech, put on 4.5p to 32.5p, and Internet Technology gained 4p to 168p.

with festive sales down, fell 4.5p to 108.5p. Building materials group Lilleshall, forecasting a £2.7m loss, gave up 20.5p to 47.5p, and talk of a "less buoyant" market left Partridge Fine Arts 11.5p off at 62.5p. Others piling on the gloom were Banner Chemical, off 2.5p at 8.5p, and TGI, down 7p at 33p.

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SEAOQ VOLUME: 1.1 billion
SEAOQ TRADES: 74,171

City expects Snell to trump £4bn Lucas bid

BY FRANCESCO GUERRERA



raise its 288p cash offer. "Dick Snell is serious about Lucas. I think he'll come back with a 300p to 310p offer," said Mark Little, engineering analyst at BT Alex Brown.

Mr Little added that Mr Snell would probably increase the cash element of the offer in a bid to appease Lucas's UK shareholders who do not want to hold US shares.

Industry analysts believe that Mr Snell, famous for his audacious and highly-leveraged bids, will increase Federal-Mogul's tentative £3.6bn offer for the car parts and aerospace group to up to £4.2bn, triggering a bitter bid war for Lucas.

Speculation of a clash between the two US engineering giants came as Lucas announced the closure of two plants in Swansea and Cincinnati with the loss of over 1,000 jobs.

In another blow to Lucas, the company's chief executive, Victor Rice, came under fire from a union leader who warned that his plans for an American deal could put the company's 52bn pension fund at risk.

The move would force TRW – one of the biggest car parts manufacturers in the US – to about \$720m.

Two years ago Mr Snell stunned the UK engineering sector when he bought the brake-pads maker T&N for £1.5bn, when Federal Mogul was valued at just £1bn. Since then he has bought the car parts unit of the US engineer, Cooper Industries, for £1.9bn and Fei-Pro – a gasket maker – for about £720m.

However, financial experts

were focused on Mr Snell's next move. They predicted that the Federal-Mogul's offer would be accepted.

Mr Snell has promised to make

an offer to Lucas shareholders

including Federal-Mogul's highly-rated paper and a high element of debt, provided by Mr Snell's many backers on Wall Street. The purchase of Lucas, which has a £4bn turnover, would enable Mr Snell to achieve his "BHAG" well before

the market has put on their

companies, have mounted management buyouts. They believe they know their companies – and their value – better than the market and have been prepared, by borrowing and enlisting the help of venture capitalists, to let their money do the talking. Other undercard companies have used share buybacks to illustrate the belief that the market has it wrong.

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Lilleshall plunges on bank covenant breach

BY CLIFFORD GERMAN

SPORT

Rugby Union: Ulster's revitalised No 15 is in prime form for today's European Cup final against Colomiers in Dublin

Mason back to playing for kicks

IT SEEKS slightly absurd to talk about the loneliness of the long-distance goal-kicker when he can count on the unconditional support of 40,000 deafeningly vocal Ulstermen, but Simon Mason is likely to discover more about naked solitude than he ever wanted to know in the teeming, steaming pressure pit of Lansdowne Road this afternoon. Precisely a year ago, Christophe Lamaison went from crack shot to crackpot during the course of a European Cup final; by the end, he could not have hit the Arc de Triomphe with a bag of onions if it can happen to the William Tell of Brive, it can happen to anyone.

Quite rightly, Mason will take an enormous degree of mental and emotional sustenance from the fact that it did not happen to him across the border in Belfast three weeks ago. Confronted with a series of devilish kicks at delicate psychological moments during the semi-final with Stade Français at Ravenhill, his marksmanship from distance was well nigh flawless. But, by God, he felt the dead weight of expectation in every fibre of his being.

"That," he admitted this week, "was a nervy old afternoon."

"People often say that the longer kicks are the easy ones because there is no assumption that you'll stick them over; but it really depends on the circumstances of the game. The long penalties against Stade Français were real pressure shots because they kept us out of range of Diego Dominguez and his right boot. A six- or seven-point lead is so much easier to defend than a two- or three-point advantage and it meant that Dominguez had to pull some magic out of the hat rather than just make his goals. As it turned out, the magic wasn't there. It pleases me no end to think my

BY CHRIS HEWITT

Sea." You could call it a victory for my rugby over my bank balance; unlike a number of other Irish-qualified players who left the Premiership for the provinces last summer, I didn't have an international contract to act as a financial bedrock. But I figured that if I could establish myself in the Ulster side and perhaps break back into the national squad with a World Cup on the horizon, the sacrifices would be worthwhile. It was a question of pride, as much as anything."

Vindication has duly arrived in the satisfying shape of 12 European Cup points in eight nuttings, although Warren Gatland, the Ireland coach, remains unconvinced of Mason's latent international class; indeed, the 25-year-old from Birkenhead (he qualifies for the Cockles and Mussels brigade through three Irish grandparents) has yet to win a starring place in his country's A team, let alone threaten to relieve the outstanding Conor O'Shea, a personal friend, of the No 15 Test shirt. Nothing less than a faultless display against Colomiers will drive Gatland into rethink mode.

As it happens, Mason knows more about these particular French opponents than the rest of Ulster's merry band of brothers put together. "I came across them twice with Richmond in last season's European Shield and we coped a hiding both times. They're an excellent side, really very accomplished. They have a big physical presence up front, lots of skill out wide and one or two of their players, Jean-Luc Sadoiry especially, are world class. I've heard the old clichés, all that stuff about the French not travelling well and how Colomiers will hate playing at a Lansdowne Road full of hollering Ulstermen. I seem to remember people saying the same things about Brive just before they hammered Leicester in the 1997 final.

"There aren't any lines you can sensibly draw in advance of a game of this magnitude. It's a final, isn't it? That's as much as you can say. There are no favourites, no underdogs. The team that handles the nerves and copes with the uniqueness of it all will lift the trophy. Those of us fortunate enough to have played international rugby will be able to draw on the experience and help those who haven't avoided the pitfalls. It's easy to get carried away in this sort of atmosphere, as some of the Leicester guys discovered two years ago. Above all, we need to stay calm and stay together."

Whatever happens this afternoon, Mason intends to stay in Belfast, happily, an extension to his one-year contract, up for renewal at the end of the season is likely to be agreed sooner rather than later. "It's been pure enjoyment, playing here," he said. "The side is so close-knit and so mutually supportive that it was easy to settle in and find my feet again after the disappointment at Richmond. In fact, I haven't had a run of form like this since my Orrell days and I'm treasuring every second of it."

"But while we're having a lot of fun, we're also very serious about our rugby. We're not just happy to be in the final. We've looked at the tape of the Stade Français game over and over again and we've said to ourselves: 'Yes, we played out of our skins, but we can still improve technically. We can scrummage better, we can spruce up our restarts, we can cut out these errors.' By taking a professional approach and setting the right standards, we can strike a balance between lapping up all the attention and actually doing the job."

"Irish sides have this reputation of flattery to deceive, but by beating Toulouse and Stade Français we've proved we can win the tight ones. Will we win this one? Who knows? No matter how meticulous you prepare, a cup final is bound to be a swirl of passion and emotion. That is what makes the experience so special. Only one thing is certain. Everyone lucky enough to be involved will take their memories of this occasion to their graves."

kicks helped push him into a corner."

This time last year, the threecapped Irish full-back was in a corner of his own. Richmond, the ambitious Allied Dunbar Premiership club he had joined from Orrell in 1996, were paying him - handsomely, as a matter of fact - but not playing him. They preferred Matt Pini, the former World Cup Wallaby, as their last line of defence, even though Mason had contributed 321 points to their promotion drive the previous season.

"I was banging my head against a brick wall at Richmond and to be honest with you, rejection felt like a kick in the teeth. It was something I'd never experienced: I'd gone through the system, done well in every age group and at every level and suddenly, I found myself pushed to one side. I went to Blackheath on loan and removed some of the rust from my system, but I knew my whole career was in the balance. Even when Ulster got in touch and asked me to consider moving to Ravenhill, it was a hell of a decision to have to make. I knew the move would hit me in the pocket and, more importantly, my then-fiancée had just qualified as a vet and been offered a job in London. Understandably, Belfast was not one of her preferred options."

If Mason drew the line at praying for guidance, he certainly went through the agonies before abandoning a settled London lifestyle and booking his passage across the Irish

sea. "We're not just happy to be in the final. We've looked at the tape of the Stade Français game over and over again and we've said to ourselves: 'Yes, we played out of our skins, but we can still improve technically. We can scrummage better, we can spruce up our restarts, we can cut out these errors.' By taking a professional approach and setting the right standards, we can strike a balance between lapping up all the attention and actually doing the job."

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The Springbok No 8 Teichmann has reportedly been offered around £200,000, although whether that is over one, two or three years is not known. Melville denies making any offer and added: "I don't even know



Simon Mason stays relaxed in training at Ravenhill this week. 'The team that handles the nerves will lift the trophy,' says the Ulster full-back

Pacemaker

Irish prepared for miracles

GERRY ADAMS and David Trimble

are expected to share the same VIP

box overlooking the Lansdowne Road bearpit in Dublin this afternoon and in a perfect world, Ulster would win the European Cup with the last kick of the game and send the two men heading arm in arm towards Kitty O'Shea's for 50 pints of

you know what and a table-thumping chorus of "Get 'Em Down, You Zulu Warrior". Pie in the sky? Perhaps. But then, who gave the white-shirted non-hoppers from Ravenhill an earthy of making the final? Maybe one miracle will lead to another.

There has been a holy bible-full of miracles already this season. Smashed all over southern France by Toulouse in September - Ulster lost 33-3 at Les Sept Deniers that day and were distinctly fortunate to go home with the three - they recovered their wits sufficiently to record a five-point victory over the French aristocrats in the return match and set up a third meeting in the last eight.

Stunningly, Ulster then repeated the feat, winning 15-13 in a howling Friday night gale. Staggeringly, they then fought a famous rearguard action to dump the supposed tournament certainties, Stade Français, on their illustrious derrières at the

semi-final stage. Talk about your name being on the cup.

Indeed, the predestination theorists find it impossible to believe that the unknowns of Colomiers, a nondescript, communist-controlled municipality situated in the heavily industrialised suburbs of Toulouse,

will fare any better than their heavy-weight countrymen. Colomiers is not a traditional union stronghold; it is not a Beziers or a Perpignan or a Pau. Its rugby club was founded as recently as 1963 and the number of home-grown internationals can still be counted on the fingers of one hand. Until last season, when Jean-Luc Sadoiry's side beat Agen to win the European Conference (a competition for also-rans), they had never won a brass franc.

In the great firmament of French rugby, Colomiers are a satellite

of a planet. Which is precisely why they could send the Irish favourites into the black hole of defeat today. Like Brive before them - and who can forget the massacre they inflicted on Leicester two years ago? - Colomiers happily conceal their talents behind a cloak of anonymity. Ulster know all about Sadoiry, one of the world's most accomplished full-backs, but are

dangerously ignorant of Laurent Labit, Patrick Tabacco, Stéphane Peysson and the rest of the low-profile operatives whose precision work over five unforgiving months has guided their club to the biggest occasion in its brief and hitherto uneventful history.

And in one very pertinent sense, it is history that bars Ulster's road to the title. The Heineken Cup, as it was known before the politicians started interfering, was for three years the exclusive property of those

who travelled furthest to challenge for it. Toulouse beat Cardiff at Cardiff Arms Park to win the inaugural competition in 1996, while Brive - given no chance whatsoever - gave Leicester what for at the same venue the following year. It was the same story last January, when Bath crossed the Channel and staged the smash and grab raid to end them all by beating the holders in Bordeaux. Home advantage? Home disadvantage, more like.

Worrying for something approaching 48,000 of this afternoon's 49,000 crowd, Colomiers are strong in Ulster's most obvious area of weakness; they have two internationals.

Stephane Grau and the state-of-the-art hooker Marc Del Maso, in their front row and their presence should ensure another 80 minutes of reverse gear discomfort for the Irish scrum-half. Both Tabacco, perhaps the most effective line-out forward in the tournament, and Fabien Galthie, the former international scrum-half, passed late fitness tests yesterday. And although Mickael Carre's hamstring restricted him to bench duty, Jerome Steurac proved a more than adequate midfield performer in the tight semi-final victory over Perpignan.

Still, Ulster have one or two

match-winners of their own: Simon Mason, always a reliable goal-kicker, has been in golden boot form these last few weeks and if the French start getting up the nose of Clayton Thomas, the international referee from Wales, they will be made to pay for their indiscretions in the hard currency of penalty points. And what of the fly-half? David Humphreys, whose resourceful captaincy in the semi-final was overshadowed only by his own play-making ingenuity? Another virtuous effort today will surely send him scurrying sheltered into the Ireland side for the Five Nations opener with France next weekend.

Ulster badly need to go points up in the first quarter, for if they allow Colomiers the luxury of a settling-in period, the Frenchmen will have it topped and tailed by the hour mark. It has been a strange old tournament, though: Ulster's march has more than neutralised the effects of the English boycott and left an entire nation wondering whether this whole adventure was somehow meant to be. "Above all, it's a matter of keeping our feet on the ground," mused Humphreys yesterday. Yes. And Dublin ground at that. Who would have predicted it, back home in Belfast?

Wasps roused to chase Springbok Teichmann

BY DAVID LLEWELLIN

"We read in the papers that we were talking to Teichmann," Melville said, "so we thought we had better speak to his agent, which we have now done. I expect to speak to Teichmann himself sooner rather than later, probably after another conversation with his agent."

The Springbok No 8 Teichmann has reportedly been offered around £200,000, although whether that is over one, two or three years is not known. Melville denies making any offer and added: "I don't even know

if we can afford that sort of money. Teichmann is a fantastic player and we would be foolish not to follow up on the speculation."

One player who definitely moved yesterday was Richmond's Welsh international prop, John Davies, who has followed Scott Quinnell to Stradley Park, although he will not feature in Llanelli's team for today's Welsh Rugby Union Challenge Trophy final against Pontypool.

And spectators at Stradley Park for the game, which kicks off at 5.30pm, will not see any of the nine players in the Wales squad. Welsh

coach Graham Henry has reached an amicable agreement with both clubs for the players to be pulled out of the match.

Swansea rest their wing Matthew Robinson for the Swalec Cup tie against Newport, fueling speculation that he will be on the bench against Scotland at Murrayfield next weekend.

The fifth round of the Tetley's Bitter Cup sees a resurgent London Irish travelling to Franklin's Gardens for the game, which kicks off at 5.30pm, will not see any of the nine players in the Wales squad. Welsh

Northampton's Argentine front row, Frederico Mendez, said: "We made too many mistakes that night. You won't see the same errors this time. We have to tackle all afternoon. And we will have Matt Dawson back at scrum-half."

Henley are taking 1,500 supporters with them to Kingsholm for the tie against Gloucester. The National League One club, who knocked out Premiership One Bedford in the previous round, are eager to play in the cauldron of sound.

The Gloucester crowd can give visiting teams terrible stick, but

they also appreciate good rugby. With their expansive, all-out attacking approach, coupled with a miserly defence which has conceded 17 tries in the league, Henley should provide the Cherry and Whites with plenty of problems.

Newcastle's all Premiership One tie at North-East neighbours West Hartlepool was given spice when former England and Gosforth prop Colin White, now the assistant coach at West, declared: "Newcastle is just a cheque book club now, one with which I no longer have any affinity."

In another tie involving Division

One teams, Harlequins have put hooker Keith Wood and lock Garrick Morgan on the bench and have to do without the services of fly-half Thierry Lacroix (concussed) and coach-captain Zinzan Brooke. Their opponents, London Scottish, are without Scotland international centre Ronnie Eriksson.

Wendell Sailor makes his last appearance for Leeds at Leicester. Tomorrow sees Lydney of National League One entertain Cup holders Saracens at Regentsholme. Wasps play Waterloo, and Richmond are at home to Exeter.

Sydney's ugly answer to Olympic riddle

THERE COMES a point in most people's lives when they stop and ask themselves: Who am I? What am I doing? Why am I here? For me, that moment came during September 1993 as I sat in a stuffy, viewless room with approximately 50 fellow journalists who, for all I knew, were experiencing the same feelings of angst and displacement. At least they did if they had any sense.

The task upon which we were all engaged, closeted in our Monte Carlo conference room, was that of predicting to which city the International Olympic Committee - closeted in the luxuriant Hotel de Paris - would award the 2000 Games.

Of the five prospective hosts who had gathered for this qua-



MIKE
ROWBOTTOM

drennial utterance of the Olympic oracle, Istanbul and Berlin had not even a faint hope of attracting a significant proportion of the 89 available IOC votes.

Manchester, back again

after the dismal failure of their bid for the 1996 Games, had come up with an ingenious projection of round-by-round voting which ended with them victorious. The General Election, apparently, was about to be won by the Liberal Democrats. Meanwhile, the two heavyweight contenders, Sydney and Peking, were working to each other's body.

Beyond those basic facts, for the increasingly frantic members of the Fourth Estate, there was little to catch hold of but swirls of rumour, fleeting impressions, non-attributable intimations. Theory and counter-theory travelled around the stuffy room for a long, barmy week as the five basic tools of the trade - who,

what, why, where, when - were rendered ineffectual.

Sydney, we were told, had the best technical bid - "bloody near perfect" one IOC member had claimed. But that had apparently been followed by a sense among some IOC members that the Sydney bidders had become cocksure, which had adversely affected their prospects.

Peking's bid was fronted by Chen Xitong, who as mayor of the city had ordered troops to open fire on protesting students in Tiananmen Square four years earlier. Bit of a public relations hitch there, you might think. But the IOC president, Juan-Antonio Samaranch, was said to favour the Chinese because the prospect

of opening up new sporting links with their regime was the kind of thing a committee - say the Nobel Peace Prize committee - might look up favourably.

On the day before the election, 80 white roses, one for each IOC member, were delivered to the Hotel de Paris by the International Campaign for Tibet. A message was attached to each one: "Remember the political prisoners".

Would IOC members do any such thing? Hard to tell. No one was saying.

All week, individual IOC members were canvassed discreetly in hotel bars and lobbies, indicating preferences, possibilities and even, in some cases, firm commitments.

country, I always think it is a lucky country." Ouch. Bet you say that to all the bids.

In Sydney, he was pictured with schoolchildren sporting Aboriginal decorations and costume. "I am happy to be here," he declared, "and I hope to come again, many, many times - maybe also in the year 2000!" Tell you what, cobber, play your cards right and you could be in there.

In the preceding months, Samaranch had trailed the IOC's availability teasingly around the block. In Manchester, holding hands with children from a Sale infant school, he was cheered by children waving Union Jacks.

Asked whether the rain which had fallen on that day would have a dampening effect on the city's chances, he replied: "We are used to rain. When I am travelling and I find rain in a

feated Peking by 45 votes to 43. Who could have predicted that?

Even that hugely experienced observer of IOC matters, John Rodda of *The Guardian*, had called it wrong.

But then Rodda presumably didn't know about the \$Aus105,000 (£42,000) it now transpires that the Australian Olympic Committee president, John Coates, produced on the night before the vote with the intention of swaying two wavering African nations. Far for the course, it now appears.

Personally, I feel more settled about the whole Monte Carlo experience after this month's revelations, knowing that what was wrapped in the mystery inside the enigma was not a riddle, but a hung.

Super Bowl XXXIII: Denver face determined opposition from underdogs as they attempt to repeat last year's victory

Six-year wait for revenge fires Reeves

AN UNEXPECTED sight may have greeted the surgeons who performed a quadruple heart bypass operation on Dan Reeves last month: a deeply scarred organ full of anger and bitterness.

Reeves, head coach of the Atlanta Falcons, appears on the surface to be perfectly temperamentally suited to the peculiar demands of his profession. It is a job he has performed with distinction for 17 years; no other active coach can emulate his 172 career victories, nor his record of four Super Bowl appearances.

Despite his medical condition, Reeves will tomorrow lead the Falcons in Super Bowl XXXIII where he will face the Denver Broncos, the team which fired him six years ago. That alone adds a spicy personal subplot to America's premier sporting soap opera. Throw into the mix the fact that Denver's head coach, Mike Shanahan, and quarterback John Elway are the people Reeves holds responsible for his demise, and you have the elements of a Shakespearean drama. Watching the sidelines will be almost as much fun as observing the action on the gridiron.

It all happened six years ago, but for Reeves, the psychological wounds remain as fresh as the physical ones inflicted on his ailing heart just six weeks ago. "There's still a lot of hurt there that won't ever go away," he said. "I don't think any time you're fired, and you've been in a place for 12 years and had the success we had, that you understand it or [can] say it doesn't hurt you." The story goes that Reeves hired Shanahan, an exciting young prospect, to coach his wife receivers in 1984, promoting him

BY NICK HALLING
in Miami

to offensive co-ordinator a year later. All seemed well. With Elway masterful at quarterback, Denver went to three Super Bowls, in a four-year spell in the late 1980s, and although they lost them all, the Broncos were recognised as a force within the game.

Shanahan joined the Los Angeles Raiders as head coach in 1993, but lasted less than two years, and when he was sacked Reeves swiftly brought him back to Colorado, this time as quarterbacks coach. Problems

soon followed. In a 1990 report in the *Denver Post*, Elway was quoted as saying that communication between himself and Reeves was "poor". The rift deepened as Shanahan and Elway became increasingly close. Reeves believed that his assistant was working with the players behind his back and even creating plays without the knowledge or permission of the head coach. Unwilling to be marginalised, Reeves dismissed Shanahan in 1992 for insubordination.

A year later, following a mediocre 1992 campaign, Reeves too was gone, and Elway described playing for his former boss as "hell". After a two-year hiatus during which Wade Phillips tried unsuccessfully to revive the franchise's fortunes, Shanahan returned as the head man with a glowing endorsement from the veteran quarterback. Denver have been irresistible since winning their first Super Bowl last year and are heavily favoured to retain their title on Sunday.

Reeves then spent four years with the New York Giants taking them to the play-offs before landing the thankless task

of attempting to revive Atlanta in 1997. The Falcons, one of the league's most consistent losers, had won just three games the year before and the enormity of the task was evident as they won just once in Reeves' first eight games.

Since then, the turnaround has been dramatic. The Falcons have lost just four times in 26 outings: 60-1 underdogs at the start of the campaign, they are without doubt the most surprising team in Super Bowl history. Reeves has rightly been named coach of the year for the achievement, his reputation restored beyond debate.

At times this week, however, his feud with Shanahan and Elway has threatened to overshadow the occasion. His resentment has not dimmed with the years. "You never forget those things," said Reeves. "But am I a person that's not going to speak to Mike Shanahan or John Elway? I don't live my life like that, but I won't go out to eat with them or go socially to a function."

A surprised Shanahan says his relationship with his former boss is beyond repair, and denies accusations of undermining his previous employer's authority. "I thought we were both going to take the high road on this and I don't really understand it," he said.

Elway, appearing for what may be the last game of a glittering 16 year career is maintaining diplomatic dignity through it all. "That was six years ago," he said. "I've moved on, and I concentrate on the good times. We had a hell of a lot more good times when he was here than bad times."

Can the feud be resolved? Not according to Reeves. "You'd have to get us in a room with a psychiatrist and make us talk about what happened," he said. "But that will never happen because somewhere along the line, you find somebody who's not telling the truth."

Since airing his grievances earlier this week under the intense scrutiny of 3,500 media representatives assembled in Miami for the game, Reeves has apologised for his words, the apology being accepted by Shanahan. In a real sense however, his heart has been laid bare in more ways than one in recent weeks. Perhaps a victory over the team that caused him such trauma six years ago will finally allow Dan Reeves' wounds to heal.

Reeves then spent four years with the New York Giants taking them to the play-offs before landing the thankless task

NOT SINCE the New York Jets 30 years ago has there been such a surprise Super Bowl participant as the Atlanta Falcons, writes Nick Halling.

Back in 1969, in the build-up to the game, the Jets' flamboyant quarterback "Broadway" Joe Namath famously guaranteed an upset victory over the favoured Baltimore Colts. Perhaps that is what Atlanta cornerback Ray Buchanan had in mind when he made the same prediction earlier this week, guaranteeing an upset in tomorrow's game.

"It's for fun," he said, "but having a guarantee is more of a confidence thing. It's not like a slap in Denver's face. This is really. This football team has an opportunity to shock the world."

To do that, they must first stop the Broncos' top-ranked

running game, led by Terrell Davis. One of only four players ever to rush for 2,000 yards in a season, Davis is in compelling form, as he showed with game-winning performances in the play-offs against the Miami Dolphins and the Jets. If the Falcons cannot stop him, it is unlikely that Buchanan's guarantee will stand up.

"If you shut down Terrell Davis, your chance of winning goes up," said Atlanta linebacker Jessie Tuggle. "They depend so much on running the ball, so that's what we have to do."

The Falcons boast a solid ground attack of their own, with Jamal Anderson producing a string of impressive performances this season. However, the Denver defensive unit has been imposing in the play-offs, and in Bill Romanowski they

have a formidable run-stopper. With both teams committed to containing the run, Davis and Anderson could be in for a painful night's work.

If it becomes a passing game, Atlanta and Denver appear well matched. The Falcons' veteran quarterback Chris Chandler is playing the best football of his 11-year career and is working effectively with his receivers, Tony Martin and Terence Mathis. Both have the ability to take advantage of Denver's perceived weakness against a well-thrown ball.

Similarly, the Broncos will simply turn to John Elway should Davis falter. The team's inspirational leader for 16 years, Elway has retained the ability to make the big play at the crucial time. His #81 receiver Ed McCaffrey is likely to cause

damage against the effective but small Atlanta defensive backs.

In contrast, the Falcons only boast three players with Super Bowl experience and only one of them, former Green Bay Packers safety Eugene Robinson, has tasted success. However, the Falcons believe that as with Denver against Green Bay a year ago, their status as underdogs can work to their advantage. After 33 seasons of mediocrity, they have a founded expectation to arrive in Miami, and just like Namath's Jets three decades ago they are full of confidence.

"We came in this year with the intention of changing the whole image of the Atlanta Falcons, and that's what we've done," said Tuggle. "This is the ultimate goal, but being part of it is not enough. I came here for one reason, and that's to win."

Donewald on misconduct charge

THE BASKETBALL authorities will focus on Moorways in Derby tonight, where the Storm's sole coach, Bob Donewald, will be under pressure to behave after an extraordinary week even by the American coach's disciplinary standards.

Just four days ago he was banned for two games and fined £200 after his latest appearance before the disciplinary committee, on his 29th birthday. Now, Donewald has been charged with misconduct following a report by the commissioner, Mal-

BASKETBALL
BY RICHARD TAYLOR

Saturday and three Birmingham supporters have made complaints to Derby police.

On Tuesday Donewald was dealt with for abusing the officials at Derby's game with Greater London Leopards, after he had been fined another £200 earlier in the season for criticising officials after the defeat at Thames Valley Tigers.

Donewald may find it hard to be on his best behaviour tonight against a team he loves to beat, as third-placed Derby face second-placed Manchester Giants.

London Towers confirmed the worst kept secret of transfer deadline week yesterday by signing the American guard-forward Randy Duck to replace fellow American Eric Kubel. Duck was due to make his debut at Newcastle Eagles last night.

Two other new signings make debut tonight: Justin Phoenix plays for Birmingham at Leopards and #7 Adam McCann for Worthing Bears at home to Chester Jets. The Bears have not won since beating Chester on 3 October - 24 games ago.

Beeston lose out to national side

HOCKEY
BY BILL COLWILL

YET AGAIN the absence of important players will affect tomorrow's National League programme. This time it is caused by an England Under-18 training camp at Bishop's Abbots. Worst affected will be Beeston, at home to third-placed Southgate, who will be missing Philip Sully, Matt Taylor and Andy West.

Graham Griffiths, Beeston's manager, expressed his amazement that hockey had not got to grips with the problem. "It would never happen in football."

The Hockey Association, however, will simply say that there is just not enough time in the season to fit everything in.

Perhaps England should follow the German example and split the National League season into two halves with a long mid-season break, playing on after Easter into the summer months. After all, hockey no longer shares grounds with cricket nor are top players able to play both games.

Andy Billson, the Teddington coach, has left the club and has signed for local Midland club, Northampton Saints, whom he has also been coaching. The Teddington captain, Brett Garbett, has taken over as coach for tomorrow's visit of Cannock.

Hounslow entertain East Grinstead, who beat Brooklands 9-1 last week.

With the arrival from Reading of Mark Hoskins, the Guildford coach, Ian Jennings believes they can give the leaders, Canterbury, a tough fight and possibly even take the points.

Dan Reeves apologised for this week's outburst Allsport

150

Set the controls for the heart of Wimbledon

IT SEEMS that following last week's eulogy to him in this column, the powers of Harry Davies have increased; now he has the gift of bilocation too, commenting on the tennis from Australia and the ice skating from Prague, all in the same day. How on earth does he do it? The tennis cubicle in Television Centre is yards and yards away from the skating cube.

It is not just him. Sue Barker is at it as well, though in her case she has to fight against her busy back-projections. What's the point of these? Are they to hoodwink us into thinking Barker is sitting on a bridge in downtown Prague? When we've just seen her in bas-relief against the Melbourne skyline?

Thursday's *Horizon* was about supernovae, which ex-

CHRIS MAUME
SPORT ON TV



plode with the force of 10 billion stars (the expansion of the universe is speeding up by the way, not slowing down as the boffins thought), outstripping gravity and leading eventually to cold, dark, largely empty universe in a few billion years' time, or whenever Manchester City return to the Premiership, whichever is sooner. On the tennis highlights programme earlier the same day (BBC2) it

was possible to witness something roughly similar, though it is to be hoped that the career of Amelie Mauresmo, the French Amazon who crushed world No 1 Lindsay Davenport underfoot in the semi-finals, lasts a little longer than the three weeks it takes for a supernova to burn itself out.

"It was like playing a guy," Davenport mumbled ruefully afterwards. She is no sylph-

like shrinking violet herself, and for the spectator, it was like watching two guys play.

Not that there is anything wrong with that – this is not one of those laments for the days when women only served over arm because their hustle got in the way. I am all for strong women, and the ferocity of some of the exchanges between Davenport and Mauresmo was thrilling.

Mauresmo is a big girl, no doubt about it – upper arms like Henry Cooper's, fabulous huge shoulders that radiate power and presence. Apart from the protrusions at the front, and with a few adjustments down below, I would do goal for a body like that. With a big determined jaw and eyes like a cobra, she has the granite-like impassivity

of a Borg – the sportsman, that is, not one of the bionic, "resistance-is-futile" Star Trek badies. Set the controls for the heart of Wimbledon.

It was appropriate that on the weekend of the fourth round of the FA Cup, Casually (BBC1) should have a footballing plot. Tigers, Holby's local small-time team, are in a David 'n' Goliath Cup tie. Karl the star striker has a hangover from hell, so the spivvy thug of a manager blackmails his predecessor as star striker, now the embittered perennial substitute, to slip a little something into his glucose to pick him up.

They go 1-0 down and Karl is struggling. Vic Harness, the grizzled trainer (and Karl's father figure) shouts: "He'll have a heart attack!" I wonder how

this plot is about to develop, you say to yourself. Karl, despite his knee injury, equalises. Then he has a heart attack.

There were a good few things wrong in the veracity department: for a start, some players do take, have taken, stimulants of diverse varieties (just ask Willie Johnston), but on-field heart attacks are about as common as Liverpool winning an FA Cup tie against Manchester United. And the idea that a "top Spanish club" would send its manager to watch a player who had not even made it beyond the lower reaches is laughable.

It seems *Casually* specialists in improbable plot lines, though: a fan who had bought tickets for the match appeared to have knocked his son about for losing them: the lad, it trans-

pired, a 14-year-old alcoholic with cirrhosis of the liver, had been beating dad up for ages.

Again, I am sure this has happened once or twice, somewhere, but not very often indeed someone will regale me with figures to demonstrate the appalling prevalence of the frightening unseen menace of Teenage Alcoholic Lower-League Football Fans abusing their father because mum died three years ago and he didn't cry about it – the charity is called TAL-LFF. I am told, if there are any sufferers out there.

Still, at the end, after a turbulent we-can-work-this-out-together scene, son asked dad the score in the match. "It was a draw," he replies. "We have a second chance." Do you think he

was referring just to the football match there? Or might there have been a double meaning?

There was no ambiguity about Will Carling's appearance on *Sporting Greats* (BBC2, Thursday) as an exercise in rehabilitation through self-deprecation it was shameless, if not wholly successful.

"I had no effect on the team that week – obviously," he said of his start as England captain. "And it went on for eight years." This was a typical response, reeking of apparent humility. It's impossible to shake off the feeling with Carling, though, that it is all an act, and with a bit too much slyness and what looked like raised eyebrows, he came across like Dirk Bogarde as Aschenbach in *Death in Venice*. It made me feel queasy, anyway.

Trials are must for Hickstead hopefuls

EQUESTRIANISM
BY GENEVIEVE MURPHY

SHOW JUMPING: riders wishing to compete in the Royal International Horse Show and the European Championships, which are both to be held at Hickstead this year, will be obliged to compete in at least one of the preceding International Championship Team Trials.

The results of the first two trials – at Windsor and the Suffolk County Show at Ipswich – will replace the rider rankings as qualification for the Royal Internationals, with the top 12 riders gaining entry to the Hickstead show, where the last of the three championship trials will take place in July. They will join three others (Andrew Davies, Jane Annett and John Renwick), who have already qualified through the long-standing series of Area International Trials.

Last year Geoff Billington declined to compete in the championship trials, which decided three of the five places on the British squad for the World Equestrian Games. Believing that he had the best horse in the country in Virtual Village's Otto, he was confident of gaining one of the two places chosen by the selectors.

The revised rules mean that Billington will have to take the trials seriously in order to be considered for the Great Britain team for this year's European Show Jumping Championships.

The trials have produced satisfactory results. Robert Smith in 1987 and Di Lampard last year earned their places on championship squads through the trials and both went on to achieve the best score for the British team.

VENUES FOR INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP TEAM TRIALS (show jumping): Royal Windsor Horse Show (15 May); Suffolk County Show, Ipswich (2-3 June); Royal International Horse Show, Hickstead (7-11 July).

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Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov keeps Tommy Haas at arm's length during yesterday's men's singles semi-final in Melbourne

Allsport

YEVGENY KAFELNIKOV overwhelmed Tommy Haas 6-3, 6-4, 7-5 yesterday to spare the 1999 Australian Open a dubious place in the sport's history.

The 10th-seeded Russian brushed aside the 20-year-old German in a 113-minute semi-final to rule out the prospect of the first unseeded men's singles final in the Open era.

There were clear indications of Haas's fate as early as his first service game when Kafelnikov broke to go 2-0 up. The 1996 French Open champion went on to serve 16 aces and significantly made only 27 unforced errors to his opponent's 41. The 24-year-old Kafelnikov said: "I knew I had to stay tough and focused and I did that wonderfully."

Kafelnikov however quickly claimed that the in-form Thomas Enqvist would start the final as favourite, the Swede having won two Open warm-up tournaments and having beaten two seeds – including the twice US Open winner Pat Rafter – in the early rounds here.

"Hopefully I will get my chances but I feel like I'm definitely the underdog," said Kafelnikov, who missed the last two Australian Opens through injury. In 1997, he was ruled out when he broke a finger while battering a punchbag in the gym and last year injured his knee in a skiing accident.

There was no room for doubt about Kafelnikov's performance yesterday. He started strongly against a tentative Haas and gained important early service breaks in the first two sets. It was the first time Haas had made it past the third round in a Grand Slam tournament and he began nervously. The match was almost over by the time he began to find his range with damaging groundstrokes.

TENNIS
BY DERRICK WHITE
in Melbourne

Kafelnikov completely outplayed Haas, breaking the baselineman's serve in the 11th game of the final set and then calmly serving out the match to love. He varied his tactics constantly: slamming 16 aces and also drawing Haas into long rallies. Kafelnikov said he would need to adopt similar tactics against Enqvist, who beat the unsung Nicolas Lapentti of Ecuador 6-3, 7-5, 6-1 in the first semi-final.

"The one thing I do have to do is to stay in the match with Thomas is to hold my serve," Kafelnikov said. "I know if I stay in the match with him I will have my chances."

The semi-final was played with Melbourne Park's retractable centre court roof closed after light rain fell, a decision that did not please Kafelnikov. "I was actually disappointed with the decision, because Tommy beat me once indoors," he said.

His win buried the prospect of the first unseeded men's singles final in more than 30 years of Open tennis. Richard Krajicek beat MaliVai Washington in what was originally billed as an unseeded final at Wimbledon in 1996. But an International Tennis Federation spokeswoman said Wimbledon officials decided after the final that Krajicek was a seed, replacing Austria's Thomas Muster who had withdrawn from the tournament.

Other than that, the only unseeded final was at the 1966 US National Championships when Fred Stolle beat his fellow Australian John Newcombe 4-6, 12-10, 6-3, 6-4. Open tennis began in 1968.

Storm over man-sized Mauresmo

THE WORLD'S top two women players have denied they were talking about anything but tennis when they said Australian Open finalist Amelie Mauresmo was like a man.

The 19-year-old Mauresmo has powerful shoulders and a game to match. She saw off the world No 1, Lindsay Davenport, in the semi-finals on Thursday with a fearsome display of power tennis. She is also openly gay and speaks freely about her relationship with a woman who travels with her on the tour.

But the player was said by her coach to be angered by comments from Davenport and

is the strong favourite to take the title.

Enqvist has yet to lose a match this year with titles from Adelaide and Melbourne warming up events affirming his return from foot surgery last year.

"I'm quite amazed to see how strong he is when he comes

back after an injury," said compatriot Jonas Bjorkman, who reached the doubles final with Australian partner Pat Rafter in a five-set semi-final against the second seeds, Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde.

Bjorkman tipped Enqvist to win the title. "Thomas is so

strong and so focused, to take his chance when he really has it. And he seems to be more ready than ever to win a Grand Slam," Bjorkman said.

Rafter, who was seeded third but beaten in the third round by Enqvist, was not quite so sure, as he pointed to an in-form

Kafelnikov, who is under no pressure. The US Open champion would not, however, begrudge Enqvist the title many thought the Australian himself would take.

"If he wins he's a very deserving winner, no doubt about it," Rafter said.

Hingis and Anna Kournikova took their first Grand Slam title together yesterday when they beat the top seeds, Lindsay Davenport and Natasha Zvereva, 7-5, 6-3 in the women's doubles final.

The pair won five successive games from the ninth game of the first set to dominate the middle stages of the match on Melbourne Park's Centre Court. Last year Hingis became only the third woman in history to complete a doubles Grand Slam. She has won the past three Australian Open doubles titles and is aiming for her third successive singles title.

Hingis and Anna Kournikova took their first Grand Slam title together yesterday when they beat the top seeds, Lindsay Davenport and Natasha Zvereva, 7-5, 6-3 in the women's doubles final.

The row precedes an already intriguing women's final. Mauresmo, the former top-ranked junior who pumps iron to build up her muscles, twice took Hingis to three sets last year. Clearly distressed by the controversy, she avoided camera crews at Melbourne Park yesterday and went to Kooyong, a few miles away.

While Christie runs the shorter distance, Campbell is concentrating on tomorrow's 200 metres event, which Mauresmo is also intending to contest. Campbell says he doesn't want to beat his coach, which is very thoughtful of him.

The longer sprint looks like being just as competitive as the 60 metres, given that it is also due to include 400 metres runners Solomon Wariso, who returned from warm weather training in California just over a week ago, and Jamie Baulch. In the high jump, Olympic bronze medalist Steve Smith is planning to take part in his first competition since he injured his neck in a training accident last July. Smith, who spent almost two weeks in hospital after his injury, completed his first prong earlier this month.

Colin Jackson, who retained his European high hurdles title last summer, is a clear favourite for the 60m hurdles title, having warmed up for the event by winning over that distance in Karlsruhe, where he was clocked 7.47sec.

Darren Ladejo, the former European 400m champion who is now concentrating on the decathlon, is among the other competitors due to contest the event, as is Paul Gray, the 1994 Commonwealth high hurdles bronze medallist.

Christie hoping for sharp performance

LINFORD CHRISTIE gets back to the sharp end of athletics today as he comes temporarily out of retirement to contest the 60 metres at the Lymex Express AAA Indoor Championships in Birmingham.

The former world and Olympic 100m champion, who will be 39 in April, will not be able to shave for six months if he fails to beat 6.70sec for the distance – a challenge laid down to him by the group of athletes he now coaches, including European 100m champion Darren Campbell and world indoor 400m silver medallist Jamie Baulch.

The younger runners, tired of hearing Christie tell them how he could still beat them even though he had retired from top class racing in 1997,

ATHLETICS
BY MIKE ROWBOTTOM

set him a target which he could not resist trying for. But Christie looks likely to remain clean shaven given his performance in last Sunday's Karlsruhe indoor 60 metres race, where he finished second to Marc Blume of Germany in a time of 6.57sec in what was his first competitive race since he turned out for his club, Thames Valley Harriers, last August.

Christie will face a younger generation of challengers at the National Indoor Arena, including Jason Livingston, who has recorded 6.51 this season, European indoor silver medallist Jason Gardener and world ju-

nior 100 and 200 metres champion, Christian Malcolm.

The event gives UK Athletics, whose midweek launch was overshadowed by the doping controversy surrounding European 200 metres champion Doug Walker, the opportunity to get back on to the kind of track it prefers.

A ruling on whether Walker will have a case to answer after providing two urine tests believed to have shown up traces indicating the banned steroid nandrolone is expected to be made early next week.

Christie is not the only world title winner at the National Indoor Arena. Steve Cram, the former world record holder for the mile, will be making his commenting debut for BBC, Maebashi, Japan, in March.

Winners will qualify automatically, assuming they have qualifying marks.

Jo Wise, who like Hansen won a Commonwealth title last September, is an entrant for the women's long jump.

While Christie runs the shorter distance, Campbell is concentrating on tomorrow's 200 metres event, which Mauresmo is also intending to contest. Campbell says he doesn't want to beat his coach, which is very thoughtful of him.

The longer sprint looks like being just as competitive as the 60 metres, given that it is also due to include 400 metres runners Solomon Wariso, who returned from warm weather training in California just over a week ago, and Jamie Baulch.

In the high jump, Olympic



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Cyfor Malta can do the Business

BY GREG WOOD

WHEN THE crowds struggle away from Prestbury Park after today's card at Cheltenham, the people who are not already planning their next trip to the course will be wishing desperately that they could. After the Wrangler, the Four-Year Old Hurdle which brings proceedings to a close, the next race at Cheltenham will be the Supreme Novices' Hurdle, the opening event of the Festival itself. Many of those at the track today will be back again in March – and so, for that matter, will plenty of the horses.

WHOEVER the time comes to look back on the jumps season, it will be a surprise if at least one of the Festival's 20 winners did not also run at today's meeting. In fact, there could easily be as many as four of them getting a taste for the track before the main event, such is the quality of the principal contests.

The betting for the Stayers' Hurdle in particular will depend heavily on the outcome of the Cleeve Hurdle, which brings together Lady Rebecca – most bookies' idea of the favourite for the Stayers' – face-to-face with Commando Court, the best in this division in Ireland, and several others with the form to trouble her. The Gold Cup market, too, could look very different by this evening, after See More Business has taken on Cyfor Malta in the Pillar Proprietary Chase.

In the circumstances, Cyfor Malta (2.55) is the safest choice today, as he makes his first start since his successful seasonal debut in the Murphy's Gold Cup. Young, relatively unexposed and trained by Martin Pipe, he is a serious Gold Cup

contender himself, and just one of a strong team from the champion trainer's yard which could dominate today's card.

Unsinkable boxer, who runs in the novice handicap chase, is another Pipe runner who should be back for the Festival. His chasing debut was comfortable enough, but he would have beaten the same rivals just as easily over hurdles, and today's field offers a much stronger challenge.

If anything is to beat Lady Rebecca in the Cleeve Hurdle, it will probably be Commando Court, but again, it is not really a race to bet on. The last two events, though, are more tempting, with EVEN FLOW (nap 4.05) and Behrajan (4.40) the ones to back.

The Great Yorkshire Chase at Doncaster offers any number of possibilities at first sight, but there may be fewer serious contenders than the size of the field suggests. The Toiseach will be the choice of many, despite his poor run in the Hennessy Gold Cup last time, but the value could lie with another horse whose last outing was a disappointment. Prolifent (next best 3.10) was roundly beaten at Aintree in November, but previously looked a horse to follow when winning on his British debut. Anabranach (3.40) could be another value bet at the same meeting, while Young Tomo (1.15) and River Unshorn (2.15) have good chances at Ayr.

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Paul Nicholls with See More Business who attempts to repeat last year's Pillar Chase success. Edward Whitaker

AYR

HYPERION
12.45 Quick March
1.15 Scotia Nostra
1.45 Lord Podgari
2.15 Maître De Musique

GOING: Heavy. Left-hand galloping course, run-in 210yds.
Course: E of town A725. Ayr station (service from Glasgow) 1m. **ADMISSION:** G £2.40; Grandstand £10; 2nd floor £12.50.
PRIZE MONEY: STAKES £10,000.

LEADING TRAINERS: Mrs M Revell 13-12 (17%); P Monteith 12-13 (12.5%); C Parker 13-92 (13.8%).
LEADING JOCKEYS: A Dobbie 32-17F (21.8%); B Storey 24-19F (15.2%); P Niven 13-13 (15.6%); R Supple 16-10 (20%); T Reed 10-95 (15.5%); R McGrath 3-6 (15%).
FAVOURITES: 154-38 (23.3%).

BUNKERED FIRST TIME: Surin Imp (voted), 215; Pessimistic Dick (2.50).

12.45 EBF. NH NOVICE HURDLE (Qualifier) (CLASS D) £4,000 added 2m 4f Penalty Value 22.768

1 QUICK MARCH (28) (C) John Venables Racing 6 Maynes 6 11 ... H Horrocks (5)
2 CASTLE STAFFORD (27) (D) Michael L 100 6 11 ... M B Gleave (7)
3 ROBINSON SUN (21) (D) J M Hobbs 6 11 ... G Brandy (3)
4 ROCHBERG (45) (BP) G S Pate 6 11 ... C McCormick (3)
5 1P-22 STOWHILL (15) (J) Howard Johnson 6 11 ... A Smith (1)
6 THE MIDNIGHT GROCER (Aerobatic Investments Ltd) L Lungs 7 11D ... R Supple (1)
7 ANALOGICAL (7) (Mrs D McCormick) D McLean 6 10 ... A C Doyle (5)
- declared -

BETTING: 4-1 Quick March, 2-2 Stowhill, 2-2 Rochberg, 2-1 Goldben Sun, 3-1 others.

FORM GUIDE
QUICK MARCH is going the right way and the others will have to provide plenty of improvement to beat her today.

1.15 GLENGOYNE MALT FINAL NOVICE H'CAP (CHASE) (C) £12,000 2m 5f 110yds £8,500

1 0P12 SCOTIA NOSTRA (49) (CD) (The Box Racing) J C O'Brien 7 12.0 ... R McGrath (1)
light green, white sleeves, red cap, white spots

2 P1U12 COURSE DOCTOR (4) (Richard Johnson) H 7 11 ... B Harding (1)
dark blue and white diamonds, striped sleeves and cap

3 0322 MERHAB (32) (CD) (O'Brien & Bunting) L Lungs 7 10 ... R Supple (1)

4 51-91 YOUNG TOMO (49) (D) (John Venables Racing) J M Hobbs 7 10 ... A Smith (1)

5 3-041 SINGLE SOURCE (3) (Hawes) A Whinans 6 10 ... S Taylor (1)

royal blue and orange chequered, chevrons on sleeves, royal blue cap, orange star

- 5 declared -

MIMIMUM WEIGHT: 102. True handicap weight: The Super 7 11.25; 2nd 10.50; 3rd 10.25.

BETTING: 8-2 Scotia Nostra, 3-2 Course Doctor, 4-1 Merhab, 5-1 Young Tomo, 14-1 Single Source.

686: No corresponding race

FORM GUIDE

Scots Nostra: A winner here and at Carlisle (best). Merhab just over a length and 50% worse in the final before a fine 2nd to the in-form King of Spots at Cheltenham.

Course Doctor: Latest two wins gained on the course, though unseated on subsequent visit here. Outpaced by Bobby Grant in the testing ground at Newcastle a fortnight ago.

Merhab: Mud-loving stayer over hurdles and scored from Mr Frankland in the soft at Newcastle before being beaten a distance by Cheltenham Child at Haydock, earlier or caught on the run-in and beaten just over a length by Scots Nostra at Carlisle but 80yds up.

Young Tomo: Good ground hurdles winner and met well to this distance at Ascot (4th to Merhab) and to last Tuesday's fixture at Musselburgh. Testing ground a worry. Single Scoring: 7-length 2nd to Bardon at Kelso, then 2nd in the handicap when 4th to Scotton Green at Haydock, staying on well in both. 220yds off handicap today.

VERDICT: Scots Nostra is an odd-on shot when he qualified away from Merhab at Carlisle in November but the outcome is tricky to predict with Merhab showing a 26-pf. However, they could both be stretched to handle COURSE DOCTOR, who has gained both chase wins on the course and soiled by a return visit after the latest defeat at Newcastle.

1.45 TOTE GOLD TROPHY TRIAL H'CAP HURDLE (B) £15,000 added 2m Penalty Value £9,968

1 0522 JARCO (PO1) (S) (Sp & Pol) Mrs D Thompson 6 12.0 ... D Parker (1)

royal blue and emerald green check, royal blue sleeves, emerald green accents

2 2624 CAULKER (6) (C) (T Barnes) M Barnes 6 11 ... S Taylor (1)

green and emerald green check, yellow sleeves, black cap

3 0911 LORD RICHFIELD (12) (D) (W V & N Hams) S Epsom 8 11.5 X Alzpira (3)

maroon and grey checkered, maroon sleeves, grey accents

4 1-52 LORD PODGARI (28) (D) (Mrs G Smyth) P Corlett 6 12 ... C McCormick (3)

emerald green, light blue check and sleeves, emerald cap

5 2-52 DAT COUTURE (8) (CD) (Alec George) Mochrie 11 11 ... R Supple (1)

blue, brown checked sleeves, orange cap

6 1-31 EPONINE (39) (D) (Eric B Atkin) E Atkin 10 11 ... O Bradley (1)

emerald green and white checkered, black sleeves, white cap

7 2201 CRYSTAL GIFT (26) (CD) (Mrs A Whinans) A Whinans 7 10.5 ... N Horrocks (5)

dark green, red and white checkered sleeves and cap

8 0514 WELL APPOINTED (26) (D) (Crusin' Razors) E Hartigan 6 10 ... R Gibson (7)

dark green and light green diamond, dark green sleeves, light green cap

- 8 declared -

BETTING: 3-1 Lord Podgari, 4-1 Eponine, Lord Richfield, 5-1 Crystal Gift, Caulker, 6-1 Dat Couture, 12-1 Well Appointed, 3-1 Jars.

FORM GUIDE
Jars: Automatic topweight again and cannot be considered.

Caulker: Tough front-runner who won the race last year with only 10st. Saw off Robbo and Austin Merhab eight days ago but not suited to carrying big weights and held by Eponine on previous running at Wetherby.

Lord Richfield: Dual winner this season and still took against Major Sponsor and Lord Lamb in a novice last time. Game in 8 finish and copes well with the mud.

Lord Podgari: Decent bumper performer. Took on French Holly here after the hurdles debut win and will improve for his seasonal 2nd to Crystal Gift here. Fine chance with 36lb.

Dat Couture: Fourth to Crystal Gift here on reappearance and then nipped by French Holly in a chase at Kelso. May not be good enough back over hurdles.

Eponine: Clever cut-winner at Wetherby on Boxing Day and only 48s worse than Caulker (beaten 26 lengths). Handled the ground well there and interesting with Graham Bradley booked.

Crystal Gift: Bounced from 10-1 to 6-1 on reappearance here (heavy) and battled back to beat Lord Podgari just over 2 lengths. May improve further but runner-up 36lb better off.

Well Appointed: Has won only at Carlisle and Kelso and this ground may prove too testing for him on his comeback outing.

VERDICT: Eponine is on a hard-husk mark after the Wetherby success and she is bound to go well with Graham Bradley in the saddle. A big weight may prove too much for Little Caulker and the one to beat is Eponine is LORD PODGARI, who ran so well on his reappearance on this course four weeks ago. He is competently lightly raced and the 36lb pull should enable him to gain revenge on Crystal Gift.

This looks between Chummy's Sago and THE JEANS with strong preference for the latter, who looked very promising earlier in the season and will be very hard to beat if recapturing that form. Admittedly he was disappointing last time but he had a few quick races then and can be expected to bounce back to form today.

3.25 BURNS COTTAGE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,500 added 2m Penalty Value £3.171

1 14-36 MONTRIVE (28) (CD) (St Carl) G 10 11 ... S Taylor (1)

2 PRINCE OF BANTS (6) (D) (Liz Burrell) M Hammond 6 11 ... B Harding (1)

3 4-54-4 PLUTO (15) (CD) (P Monks) P Monks 6 11 ... C McCormick (2)

4 01121 CHURCH'S SAUCER (10) (CD) (Ken Bailey) L Lungs 7 11 ... R Supple (1)

5 01122 DOLPHIN (23) (CD) (Mrs D Gimpel) D Gimpel 6 11 ... N Horrocks (5)

6 01123 GAUNTY GLEN (26) (CD) (Mrs E Mather) E Mather 6 10 ... A Smith (1)

7 01124 POLITICAL MANDEATE (9) (CD) (Mrs N Horrocks) N Horrocks 6 10 ... N Horrocks (5)

- 7 declared -

BETTING: 5-2 Pluto Lad, 3-1 Church's Saucer, 3-1 Dolphine, 3-1 Gaunty Glen, 3-1 Gauntlet.

FORM VERDICT
This looks between Chummy's Sago and THE JEANS with strong preference for the latter, who looked very promising earlier in the season and will be very hard to beat if recapturing that form. Admittedly he was disappointing last time but he had a few quick races then and can be expected to bounce back to form today.

4.00 LAND O' BURNS STANDARD NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) £2,000 added 2m Penalty Value £1,574

1 0012 BURNIE (28) (CD) (St Carl) G 10 11 ... S Taylor (1)

2 0013 ROYAL MOUNTAIN (20) (CD) (Mrs D Gimpel) P Gimpel 6 11 ... C McCormick (2)

3 0014-5 COALDRIDGE (18) (CD) (Liz Gimpel) L Gimpel 6 11 ... R Supple (1)

4 0015 DANTE'S MUSIQUE (12) (D) (Robert Ogden) M Hodson 6 11 ... G Bradley (1)

5 0016-7 RIVER UNCHURN (10) (D) (J Gaskin) H 10 9 ... D Parker (1)

6 0017 BURNT IMP (20) (CD) (Mrs D Gimpel) D Gimpel 6 11 ... N Horrocks (5)

- 10 declared -

BETTING: 5-2 Pluton Lad, 3-1 Church's Saucer, 3-1 Dolphine, 3-1 Gauntlet, 3-1 Coaltredige, 3-1 Dante's Musique, 3-1 Coaldrige, 3-1 River Unchurn, 3-1 Burnt Imp.

FORM VERDICT
Ishnaid: Coolshay looks the only one with experience worth considering but this event looks ripe for a newcomer. Fashid's Lad is out of a mare who did the statute proud and is likely to run along with Pluton but on pedigree there must be a good chance that Calabria DAWN, from Calabria out of a Welsh Peasant middle-distance winner, will be capable of upsetting this bunch.

3.15 KEEP WARM IN THE RESTAURANT MAIDEN STAKES (D) £5,250

1 02-06 CUPALTAINTREE (6) (V) Scare 4.9 ... R Cochrane 5

2 02-07 JONATHAN'S GIRL (2) (Mrs D Gimpel) D Gimpel 4.9 ... R Brookes 5

3 04-08 THOMAS HENRY (7) (D) (Mrs D Gimpel) D Gimpel 4.9 ... C Hutter 2

4 04-09 BELLA (2) (Mrs D Gimpel) D Gimpel 4.9 ... R Brookes 5

5 04-10 MARY AFFAIR (USA) (D) Mrs M Precock 3.80

- 5 declared -

BETTING: 4-1 Mary's Affair, 7-2 Thomas Henry, 4-1 Dalmatian, 6-1 Bella, 10-1 Jonathan's Girl.

FORM VERDICT
A very weak maiden in which well-bred newcomer Mary's Affair would not have to be very good to make a winning debut. But THOMAS HENRY has the form on turf to take a race like this and may be able to make his experience tell.

3.40 WINTER WARMER OFFERS H

Favourite
Aljibr is
doubtful
for 2,000

PUNTERS' GUIDE

The Toiseach gets
vote of confidenceThe former top jump jockey
Steve Smith Eccles analyses
today's Great Yorkshire Chase

The Toiseach: I taught this fellow to jump and can confirm that he is in the form of his life after disappointing in the Hennessy Gold Cup. That race came too soon after his Ascot victory and he is ready to run for his life.

Mr Strong Gale: Always runs well and could make the frame.

Lively Knight: Having his first run of the season and goes well when fresh. Stable out of form.

The Last Fling: Stays forever but makes jumping errors.

Capeaway: I expect this trip to be beyond him.

Blue Charm: Runs well in his own class but out of depth.

Proficient: Best when beaten last time, so better watched.

Glitter Isle: Ran a cracker behind Eudipe at Sandown last time. A reproduction of that form will see him go close.

Frazer Island: Does not look good enough.

Chipped Out: Has won two out of four this season but against weaker opposition.

Cab On Target: Defies advancing years and is sure to put up a brave performance.

Tullymurry Toft: Needs to improve on his poor run last time.

In Truth: Well beaten in his last three runs but this Festival winner does relish Town Moor.

Nahysari: Should strip filter for run behind Mr Strong Gale but may lack the class to figure.

Noay: No form this season.

Major Bell: Without a win since 1996 and will have to wait a little longer.

Ask Me Later: Out of his league.

Symbol Of Success: Simply not up to it.

Carlisle Gale: Tough, consistent mare who runs well in her own class.

Jefferies: This Taunton winner could do well off a light weight.

Conclusion: THE TOISEACH has been given plenty of time to get over his flop in the Hennessy and can prove what a class horse he really is. Glitter Isle should figure on the evidence of his run behind Eudipe last time.

AYR

1.15: SCOTIA NOSTRA: has notched two wins and caught a taster in King Of Sparta at Cheltenham. He jumps well, acts in the mud and has already seen off Mensha.

1.45: Pitted against French Holly two outings ago, LORD PODGSKI is now in an average-looking handicap. He ran a cracker on his reappearance and should improve enough to reverse the form with Crystal Gift.

2.15: MATURE DE MUSIQUE: showed plenty of fight before going under to Nosam at Doncaster and probably has more scope for improvement than many of his rivals.

CHELTENHAM

2.20: UNSINKABLE BOXER: has long been touted as a potential Gold Cup winner and he will surely give the weight to some average opposition here if the dream is to be fulfilled.

2.55: The kid-glove treatment CVFOR MALTA has been getting from the Pipe Camp suggests major prizes are in store. The turn of foot he displayed to settle the Murphy's Gold Cup could put See More Business's suspect jumping under pressure.

3.10: COMMANCE COURT: appeared to have the Stayers' Hurdle in the bag half a mile from home at the Cheltenham festival last March but did not get home. He should be ideally suited by this shorter distance, however.

HYPERION'S
TV TIPS

FORM VERDICT

A strong pace seems likely with Rainwith, Lannkaran and Halena all suited by racing tactics. This will set Polar Prospect and SOUND APPEAL, who can look strong on a track where their stable in better form now than when she was dropped with some promise last time.

2.20 TIME NOVICE HURDLE CHASE (CLASS C) £10,000 added 2m 2f 5f Penality Value £7,360 **C4**

1: 111-1 UNSINKABLE BOXER (10) (Pat Grafton) R 7.0 ... A McCoy 4-5f, black, blue diamond and diamond on cap.

2: 230-2 CHOCODA (7) (C) (BF) J Horan 7.0 ... J Tizard

3: 143-3 SAMUEL WILDERPAIN (11) (M) S. Moore 7.0 ... R Johnson

4: 029-5 POLAR CHAMP (2) (BF) J Horan 7.0 ... R Johnson

5: 021-1 LANKARAN (20) (CD) Horan Smart Santry 7.0 ... R Williamson

6: -456- REAL ESTATE (20) (M) Ais J Moulton 7.0 ... R Johnson

7: 064-6 BEATON (USA) (BF) Lord Lansbury 7.0 ... P Hobley

8: 040-5 GIVE ME SPACE (20) (M) S. Moore & M. V. C. O'Neil 7.0 ... J. Lynne

9: 023-6 RICKER JOKER (8) (M) P. Hutchinson & P. Coates 7.0 ... C Webb

10: 304-5 HALONA (20) (M) S. Moore & C. Morris 7.0 ... J Osborne

11: 223-3 DICTUM (3) (M) K. Muller 7.0 ... J Gaffey

12: -11-1 DEDICATION (3) (M) K. Muller 7.0 ... J Gaffey

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THE SWEeper

BY CLIVE WHITE AND NICK HARRIS

Leeds lads choose the Devils' shirts

NOT SINCE Eric Cantona took himself off to Old Trafford have Leeds United fans been forced to suffer such humiliation at the hands of their great rivals as those devotees who populate the first XI of HMS Monrose. To their "horror and disbelief", their recent appeal to numerous Premiership clubs for a cast-off team kit met with just one response and you can guess who that was.

It was either wear the red and white of Manchester United or just not play. But our brave boys in the South Atlantic have an unbeaten record to maintain (nine wins and one draw) against the likes of Uruguay, Chile and Panama so they swallowed their pride and pulled on the red shirt for Britain – over the top of their worn-out old Leeds jerseys.

"We couldn't believe it when the only club generous enough to respond was Manchester United," said player-manager and Chief Petty Officer, Mark Minall. "Our compromise, a hot and sticky one, is to wear a Leeds shirt underneath. It's our only option, unless Leeds United take pity and reconsider our request. Then we can give the red and white kit to our second XI."

THE NAME of Manchester United's latest acquisition was enough to make even Andy Cole and Dwight Yorke break out in a cold sweat, never mind Teddy Sheringham. Welcomed to Old Trafford recently with open arms was one D Law, but United's present-day strikers need have no fear; the individual in question being Diana Law, the daughter of the Stretford End legend, who was joining the club's rapidly expanding communications department as a deputy press officer. It goes without saying that Diana is a lifelong United fan, but despite being Manchester-born and bred, the 25-year-old is also "a Scotland fan through and through", not that there are too many of her compatriots at Old Trafford these days. She is the latest in a long line of daughters of famous football dads who have gone into the media. Others include the BBC weather girl Suzanne Charlton (the daughter of Denis Law's old playmate, Sir Bobby), ITV's Gabby Yorath and Sky Sport's Kelly Dalgleish.

WHATEVER COMPLAINTS Morecambe fans may have this season – and lying in the top half of the Conference they cannot have too many – a lack of goals certainly isn't one of them. Last week's 2-0 defeat at Stevenage

brought up the ton for the season in the league in their 28th game, the only trouble is that their fans never know which end the goals will be coming at. No one in the Conference, or anywhere in senior football come to that, has bettered their 45-goal haul, but at the same time nor has any team, apart from Crewe Alexandra, conceded as many goals – 55. Talk about blowing hot and cold; the same club who back in August suffered the biggest defeat in Conference history – 7-0 at Leek Town – also registered the league's biggest ever away win – 6-1 at Farnborough – last month. After all that, today's home game against Yeovil Town will probably end up as a goalless draw.

SONG SHEET
A stirring chant from Levski Sofia, Bulgaria

Bulgaria has a lot of natural resources, Bulgaria has a nation of steam, Bulgaria has a little bit of everything, But only one real strong football team. Many teams are glimmering, But Levski is shining, They try to step along with Levski, but Levski flies. Levski! Ole, ole, ole. *(Tune: chanted as poetry)*

in which they disposed of the game's second longest surviving manager after Dario Gradi. However, the mood threatens to become rather darker at the next home game, – against Huddersfield, next Saturday – when the fans will be releasing 643 black balloons. Rudge, who yesterday declined an "upstairs" job at Vale Park after 19 years there, may no longer be wanted as manager but he seems to be still in demand elsewhere; he spent this week coaching none other than Manchester United, at the request of Alex Ferguson, who, coincidentally, now becomes the second longest surviving manager.

COULD GEORGE BEST, party animal extraordinaire, be making a move from the fast lane to the slipper lounge as the years catch up with him? When a caller to his local, the Phenix Arms of the Kings Road, enquired about George's whereabouts one lunchtime earlier this week, the response from a member of staff was: "Not sure where he is."

When pressed on what time George might be expected in for his regular one o'clock drink, the staff member stalled for a moment and managed: "Look, he's not here." Only at the third time of asking was a fuller explanation proffered. "I know he was taking his wife out last night," came the explanation. "So I'm not sure he'll make it in today."

FA CUP? Poisoned chalice more like. West Ham, Southampton, Aston Villa, Leicester, our ante-post portfolio is in tatters. Still, the fifth-round draw threw up some interesting possibilities and Arsenal (home tie, not in Europe), Leeds (ditto), Barnsley (ditto), Huddersfield (ditto) and Fulham (well in on a form line through Villa) are all worth a punt. Black-

burn v Tottenham, Coventry v Liverpool and Newcastle v Aston Villa look the prime draw candidates this weekend and let's throw in marauding Manchester United to beat cheerless Charlton tomorrow for some trebles. The London derby on Mardi Gras between Arsenal and Chelsea is worth a draw single tomorrow, while larpers Lazio can beat banal Bari on their home turf in Channel 4's Sunday Serie A treat.

PAOLO DI CARIO is the kind of bloke you can rely on, as a brief perusal of his recent history confirms. As a Celtic player he dazzled with his feet and wasn't bad with his hands either (top left), and although he walked out on the Ebbs, the faithful still cherished his tootsies so much that someone paid £58,000 for a pair of his boots in a charity auction. The other thing about Signor Di Cario is that he might appear brash and temperamental, but he's not afraid to show his sensitive side and has even, on occasion, laid himself bare for his devoted followers. Ooooh, just look at the smouldering stallion (top right). How can you call him fickle? Say what you like about Paolo's time with the Owls (bottom left), but he didn't give a hoot about decorum if it meant giving that little bit extra to improve the team's performance. He gave his all for Wednesday, he really did, but when push came to shove, he obviously felt he was a Hammer after all (bottom right). So no more doubting the poor fella, OK? He's passionate, devoted and true. And definitely not a loony time bomb on the make. Absolutely, definitely not that.

MASCOT ON THE MAT

Name: Toby Tyke.
Club: Barnsley.
Appearance: A cowering, seven foot bulldog, who rarely sticks to his job of promoting harmony between fans.
Crime sheet: Enraged Manchester City fans aired their grievances to David Mellor on Six-o-Six after the dirty dog cocked his leg at them on Boxing Day 1996. When City's fans decided to exact their revenge, Toby did not help his cause by wiping his backside on a toilet roll thrown from the Kop and returning it.
In mitigation, Your Honour: After seeing his side go down 2-0 at home to Manchester United, the pitying pooh, alarmed at seeing the home fans' relegation-bound despondency, did his own version of the Full Monty in torrential rain. Off came his bowler hat and frock coat, leading up to the finale of mooning at a packed ORA Stand.
Other information: To look at Toby Tyke a few months ago, you'd have thought he believed in suffering for his art. Minus an ear, he was the nearest thing a mascot will be to a Van Gogh. Luckily, a few weeks' rest and a plaster quickly fixed the curtailed canine.
Paul Stevenson

MY TEAM



JIM ROSENTHAL
OXFORD UNITED

Television football commentator
"I was born in the city, went to school there, worked on the local paper. There's a fair of people coming out of the woodwork saying they support a team but I can put my programmes on the table and prove my allegiance. We've always been a good cup team, as winning the Milk Cup 3-0 against QPR in 1986 showed. I covered the match for ITV and when we won I put my Oxford hat on at the end. That probably put my career back years! Lots of players come to Oxford and flourish, Matt Elliott, Ray Houghton, John Aldridge. The people who go are a very loyal bunch. It's a very special club in that respect."

IN T'NET

Found on the Web: Hoddle's cartoon England. THIS SITE provides evidence – via a *South Park*-style cartoon – that the England manager is an alien and that Wembley Stadium is his space ship. The site also features two games: in 'Swedish balls-up', you control Michael Owen as he attempts to head meatballs – served across the screen by Ulrika Jonsson in a bikini – into Hoddle's mouth, and in 'Kick-ham', you steer a Beckham lookalike around a pitch and help him trip Argentinian players while he is being distracted by Posh Spice flashing her underwear.
<http://www.hoddle.com/>

SEEN BUT NOT BOUGHT

NEVER HAS there been a better time for Spurs fans to nip down to White Hart Lane and stock up on night attire. The series of games against Wimbledon is so soporific a few extra pairs of pyjamas won't go amiss and the club shop can provide many options. The real bargains come in the sale though, so what better for the retiring supporter than Tottenham leather moccasin slippers, in a range of sizes, originally costing up to £14.99 per pair, but now reduced to as little as £6? A win, perhaps?

THEY'RE NOT ALL DENNIS BERGKAMP

Unsung foreign legionnaire No 24
MICHALIS VLACHOS: The 32-year-old Athens-born player started his career with Olympiakos Piraeus before moving to AEK Athens and then on to Portsmouth. Equally at home as a defender or left-sided midfield player, Vlachos adapted quickly to the demands of English football after joining Pompey a year ago on a Bosman from the Greek giants. Obviously the European Champions' League didn't agree with him and he settled instead on the bracing English south coast and a struggle against relegation. Vlachos is very much a fans' favourite already and recently scored his first goal for the club against Huddersfield. Vlachos' hard work and cool distribution arguably saved the club from relegation last season. He was injured earlier this season but has now returned to full fitness and form.

LIBERO WAGERS
(Four £2 trebles with Stanley): Blackburn to draw with Tottenham (12-5); Coventry to draw with Liverpool (12-5); Newcastle to draw with Aston Villa (12-5); Man Utd to win at Charlton (8-13).
SUNDAY SKY MATCH Arsenal v Chelsea draw (£2, 9-4, Ladbrokes).
SUNDAY CA ITALIAN JOB Bari v Lazio (£2, 11-10, William Hill & Stanley).
CURRENT KITTY: £146.64!
TODAY'S BETS: £10.53 (inc. £1.53 tax).

A swift and defiant single-finger salute

UNLIKE MOST football fans who know that moment inside out, I can't remember the first time I saw my beloved Colchester United. No matter how hard I try, my memory simply refuses to offer up a romantic August afternoon, sun beaming in the sky, as we rattle five goals past a hapless Hartlepool and I fall head over heels in love with the Us. It just wasn't like that. In fact, my earliest flashback is of a tragic Friday night home game where we were beaten 1-0 by Mansfield.

We were chasing promotion in the old Fourth Division and were probably sixth in the table at the time. I'm only guessing here, but it seemed that we spent virtually all of the early 80s being sixth in the table. Mansfield took the lead half-way through the second half, much to the excitement of their hardy away fans, all 48 of them (I know

FAN'S EYE VIEW



COLCHESTER UNITED
BY RADIO 1 DJ STEVE LAMACQ

single movement turned towards my position on the terrace and gave me a swift and defiant single finger salute. I mention this because, in my 18 years following the Us, this is probably the most meaningful

exchange I've ever had with a Colchester manager (after leaving us in the mid-80s, McDonough would later return as player-manager and lead us back into the League after two years in the Conference).

The managerial situation is uppermost in our minds at the moment following the recent, sudden departure of our last boss, Steve Wignall – another former Us player who took over from George Burley (McDonough's successor) and engineered our recent escalation in fortunes, including last year's promotion to the Second Division via the play-offs.

Wignall was the backbone of our defence when I first started supporting Colchester in 1981, travelling 10 miles on the bus to home games from the tiny Essex village where I lived. I'd given up going to nearby Ipswich Town with my Dad be-

cause a man next to me had counted them at half-time).

But it's not the pain of their celebrations that I most remember about the match, it is the fantastic noise by our own centre-forward, Roy McDonough. With five minutes to go, Roy was one-on-one with their goalkeeper and we held our breath, ready for an equaliser. Unfortunately, the luckless McDonough stumbled in the mud, scuffed his shirt wide and fell flat on his face.

Lower league fans will recognise the tragic-comedy aspect of this incident, which is why I can confess now that as the frustrated Mr McDonough struggled to regain his feet, I shouted: "Go on Roy, there's still another five minutes – make a name for yourself!" In response, the beleaguered striker rose slowly from the sludge, scraped the mud off his knees and in one

full exchange I've ever had with a Colchester manager (after leaving us in the mid-80s, McDonough would later return as player-manager and lead us back into the League after two years in the Conference).

The return of Wignall brought a warm sense of continuity to my time on the Layer Road terraces – and took us to all-new adventures. We've almost been treating our time in the Second Division this season like going somewhere exciting on holiday that you'd like to move to permanently. We've seen all these places (Gammon's Stoke, Manchester City...) I even know one fan who has taken holiday snaps at every ground, including a picture of himself in front of the Notts County scoreboard when we were 3-1 up. But after nine games without a

win, Wignall, our tourist guide, simply put down his umbrella, folded up his notes and got off the bus, saying: "I don't feel I can take this team any further."

In his time in charge, Wignall did a grand job with little cash – Colchester are not a club rolling in money. His departure has left me in a state of turmoil. I was told the news during one of my BBC Radio 1 programmes and was barely able to speak for four records. Wignall's successor, announced this week, is Mick Wadsworth, until Thursday in charge of Scarborough. Something of an unknown quantity in Essex, his appointment may be greeted with some suspicion by the Us fans. A look at Scarborough's position in the Third Division will tell you why.

■ Steve Lamacq presents BBC Radio 1's *Lamacq Live*, with *The Evening Session*.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

The least enjoyable game of cricket I've ever played in. There were two sides at each other's throats. Alec Stewart, England captain, after the ill-tempered one-day game against Sri Lanka.

I don't have a great deal of sympathy with Stan. Stan is about the lad at Rochdale who has got three months left of his contract and a mortgage to pay.

John Gregory, Aston Villa manager, on complaints about stress by his striker Stan Collymore.

Shotton called me a prick and accused me of cheating.

The last time I came to Oxford I met some sensible, intelligent people at the

university. He didn't want to talk, he wanted to fight. Frank Leboeuf, Chelsea defender, on a row with Oxford manager Malcolm Shotton during last week's FA Cup tie, after Leboeuf went off for treatment to an apparent injury.

They let themselves down, capitulated, collapsed, call it what you like. This was not an Alan Ball team. Alan Ball, Portsmouth manager, after the 5-1 FA Cup defeat to Leeds.

I said I wanted us to draw them but I was only trying to look big.

Chris Coleman, Fulham defender, on his side's FA Cup draw against Manchester United.

'It is a constant battle throughout my career in keeping the balance between calm and collected but also competitive'

Second spell is sweeter for Le Saux

BY GLENN MOORE

A CHILL day in the west London wastelands and White Van Man is out in force, parked up with the Escorts and Mondeos alongside a windswept playing field near Heathrow.

They are there to spot footballers rather than planes and there is a high-calibre collection the other side of the fence as Graham Rix puts Chelsea's multi-national squad through a practice match.

The football is better than Wednesday's snore draw between Spurs and Wimbledon in the Worthington Cup although the players' kit is unusual. Of the 22 players only five are not wearing tracksuit bottoms, woolly hats or gloves. Three are young fringe players, the others are Dennis Wise and Graeme Le Saux.

"Well hard, and a small blow for England," thinks White Van Man.

Tomorrow afternoon, when Chelsea play Arsenal at Highbury, Le Saux will again prove that, contrary to the abuse he receives from opposition supporters, there is nothing soft about him.

The Jersey-born England international has become one of the integral characters in a fixture which has prompted three red cards and 33 yellows in the last five matches and 16

"They are quite lively matches," reflected Le Saux when we met over bowls of pesto, prepared by Chelsea's Italian chef, in the training ground's functional canteen on Thursday. "It is a sign of both clubs doing well, there is a lot at stake and last season [when they met in the League Cup semi-final] we played them more times than was healthy. It led to personal battles."

Le Saux's were with Lee Dixon, who was dismissed in the September meeting following two incidents with the Chelsea player. "I think on the pitch we are both quite feisty," he said. "I don't know him at all off the pitch but have known him as a player for a long time and maybe you do get a bit of history. I go and play against him knowing what I have to do to win my battle and vice versa."

"They are generally honest encounters. There is nothing particularly nasty about them: we are both competitive."

'I get a lot of grief [from fans], but I've always tried to look at it as a backhanded compliment'

booked was when I lost possession and chased back so hard to get the ball back that the ref would say it was a malicious tackle because the way you are going back looks aggressive. That's me being honest. I've made a mistake and I've got to get back."

This scenario will be familiar to Chelsea fans even now, and Le Saux added: "Defence is not a position where, if things are getting heated, you can back away, drift inside or change your game to suit the atmosphere. You have to stand up and face it."

And the abuse? "I know I get a lot of grief but I've always tried to look at that as a backhanded compliment - they wouldn't single me out if I was a bad player - that's what you have to say to yourself. There are times when the game's stopped and you hear things and you just have to ignore it."

As a young player I wanted to play up to the crowd because you are all part of the same experience but sometimes it is so offensive it is not worth recognising they are there. They go on about kicking racism out of the game but when you hear some of the things said in front of children you think, 'what hope is there?'

"But I don't think it shapes the way I play. I've always been like that. It is a constant battle I'll have throughout my career in keeping the balance between being cool, calm and collected but also competitive."

He then provided an example of an early failure to find that balance. "My dad would tell you that when I was a kid in Jersey we would go to the beach in summer and there was a cafe about half a mile from our spot. We would go of and get an ice cream, my older sister, my dad and I, and we used to run there. They were obviously quicker than me - I was about three and my sister five - and they got too far ahead I used to have a tantrum because I couldn't physically keep up."

"If you don't have that drive and ambition I don't think you can get to the top of this profession. That's what gets to me when people make flippant remarks about footballers and money. They assume we are only in it for the money but only proper players would play irrespective. It is a great advantage and we wouldn't turn it down but you don't sit in the dressing-room thinking this match will earn me £X thousand pounds; you go out and I've got to get back."

I earned virtually nothing for four to five years. I lived in digs, didn't have a car. I didn't think anything of it. I'm grateful for not having had everything on a plate. Now I have reasonable values and hopefully am socially aware and can integrate with people without feeling better than some or worse than others."

With respect to the rest of his profession, not many footballers would describe themselves as "socially aware" and Le Saux has always had a live with the tag of being an "intellectual" among footballers. This led to his being largely

ostacised in his first spell at Chelsea - though the example of Pat Nevin showed him he could be his own man - and coloured some relationships at Blackburn.

He seems much more at home in the modern Chelsea's polyglot dressing-room and admits the camaraderie will be one thing he will miss when he gives up playing.

That will not be for a few years yet and, though management is unlikely, he is

undecided whether to play on down the leagues, stay in football in another capacity, or go into the media. The latter would seem quite likely and he has done some journalistic work, including a ghosted column for *The Sun*, which seemed an odd choice for a reader of liberal broadsheets.

In response to my question why, he could have talked about wanting to reach the masses and later mentions the need to keep his name in

currency - the deal was agreed during a long and career-threatening ankle injury - but the honesty he referred to earlier resurfaces as he admits, sheepishly: "Yes, I'm a hypocrite. It was for the money. I feel I could justify it to an extent but it was a tough decision. I hope I have values and I went home and thought, 'I don't feel good about this.' I never felt I sold my soul. I got on well professionally with the guy who wrote it and I wasn't scan-

dalous and didn't slaughter people, but I always felt a bit uncomfortable."

Though a good talker, comfortable with the self-analysis involved, Le Saux's mind is now turning to this central London home where his month-old baby, Georgina, waits with Mariana, his wife. Fatherhood is supposed to calm people down which may come in handy tomorrow.

"We've been a little bit lucky

against Coventry and Oxford,"

Peter Joy

Chelsea's Graeme Le Saux tomorrow revives his tempestuous rivalry with Arsenal's Lee Dixon - "They are quite lively matches"

Villa challenge 'in good shape'

BY GUY HODGSON

THERE HAVE been some very good weeks in John Gregory's life as manager of Aston Villa, but the last has not been one of them. As Tommy Docherty once opined during a spell of turbulence: "It wasn't for the League table there would be no fun at all."

To lose a striker was bad enough, but Stan Collymore was not the only person at Villa Park feeling shocked and depressed. There was also the little matter of the 30,000 or so with home allegiance who watched the team being bundled out of the FA Cup by Second Division Fulham.

Persevering though, both events might prove to be blessings come May. The first refuge of a beaten Cup manager is the freedom to concentrate on the League and as Villa are joint top of the Premiership that is no mere trifle.

Collymore's stress, too, at least eases the selection conundrum of trying to accommodate him, Dion Dublin, Paul Merson and Julian Joachim into two forward places. As Chelsea's Gianluca Vialli has found out since his dropped like flies, not having to make a decision about strikers makes life a lot easier.

Villa need to make the most of the silver linings because a scan of their fixture list reveals they are entering a crucial phase of the season. They have to put as much daylight as they can between themselves and rivals still embroiled in Europe and domestic cup competitions because they have a tough finish to the season.

Their last three away fixtures are at Liverpool, Manchester United and Arsenal. They might win them all, but it

week, we're in good shape. In the last six Premiership matches we've won four, drawn one and got something cheater at Blackburn, where we had to play with 10 men. Thirteen points out of the last 18 is championship form and we just need to reproduce that for the last 16 matches."

Against that Gregory ought to be aware that Villa have not won at St. James's Park in any of the seven seasons they have won the championship.

Wimbledon play in another London derby today, but before the rest of the nation yawns Tottenham are not the opponents at Selhurst Park. The fresh faces are West Ham, who are rapidly becoming unfamiliar to

their fans given the way Harry Redknapp is altering his squad.

Mixed messages have been emanating from Upton Park over whether Paolo Di Canio will start, but Marc-Vivien Foé will be the delight of headline writers everywhere. Expect a series of friend and the screaming from now on, particularly as Wimbledon include the former Hammer John Hartson.

"John will be a handful," said Redknapp, who sold him for £7.5m two weeks ago, "but I'm sure he'll be the first to shake my hand at the finish." If Hartson can remove them from Eyal Berkovic's neck, of course.

Liverpool suffered more than they deserved when the Theatre of Dreams turned into

an FA Cup nightmare last Sunday, and their list of recuperative destinations would not have included Coventry.

They have won only one Premiership match at Highfield Road, although it would be a brave man to stake much on that because both teams are as predictable as the weather.

At least Liverpool score goals, which is not something you can accuse Everton of. OK, it is becoming a cliché to bemoan the lack of action at Goodison Park, but it comes to something when the home crowd moans when the fourth official signals a number bigger than "one" for added time.

At least today there is hope they can improve on their home goals tally of three as visitors Nottingham Forest have shipped them at the rate of more than two a game on their travels. Then again Everton have gone 239 minutes without a Premiership goal and guess who are just below them on 216?

Southampton, walloped 7-1 at Liverpool last time, will have more than one club looking if they beat Leeds at The Dell, while Blackburn will be embellished by the debut of Matt Jansen and Jason McAteer against Tottenham.

Tomorrow Arsenal meet Chelsea in a high-pressure match that is not expected to improve either of their poor disciplinary records while Charlton, who ended an eight-match losing run with a 2-2 draw against Newcastle, play host to Manchester United.

United have lost their last two League visits to Charlton and their last win there was in August 1967.

Bobby should never Kop the blame again

Alan Edge longs for the return of a sadly-missed Anfield tradition

David Copperfield illusion of a foul by Redknapp which turned the whole game on its head. Not even that piece of nonsense.

You see, I believe it's time for a radical departure from all this recrimination business. Let's get back to the good old bad old days, I say. Those times when a cramp-packed Kop could take defeat with wit and humour.

We didn't need scapegoats back then. We took it all on the chin. Take Bobby for a kick-off. Years ago, the guy would have been transformed into a folk hero. We'd have unfurled a banner which read: "Bobby made the Swiss roll over laughing, tripped over the Frogs' legs and now he's munching a Spanish Omelette". The same with the opposition. We'd have made sure that, where due, we would lavish them with praise and applause. Especially if they had deserved their victory over us. Like United did.

Because, let's face it, they did. No matter how valiantly Liverpool fought. No matter that, for huge chunks of the game, they were at least the equals of United. No matter that Jamie Carragher proved himself to be as good as any central defender in the Premiership or that, with Rigobert Song alongside him and playing a 4-4-2 system with Macca roving in midfield, we could yet sneak that title. The simple fact is, on this occasion, United, great FA Cup side that they are, showed the sort of never-say-die spirit Liverpool used to display (and

encouragingly, are showing signs of again). In the final analysis, that will to win meant United deserved their good fortune.

Now it hurts me to write that previous sentence. The point is, though, I'm simply following my football education. That, you see, is the way the Kop of years ago would have seen it. To have given credit where it was due, no matter how much it hurt. That was simply the way they did it. Such occasions have passed into Anfield folklore.

Chelsea in 1966, Ferencvaros in 1968, Leeds in 1969, Red Star in 1973, right up to Arsenal in 1982. Boy, were we all sick after those defeats. Massive stakes, crushing defeats. It made no difference. The Kop would always rise above the disappointment, even the loss of a League title, to cheer their opponents with a rare magnanimity.

And do you know what? Each time we did so, we all felt enriched. It was like having a good cry. A means of unburdening yourself. Even though you felt completely dispirited, there was still a stirring sense of pride which seemed to sustain you until the next time.

In fact, this little nostalgia trip is making me feel a bit that way right now about Sunday's defeat. I just wish to God, against anybody else other than those bastards.

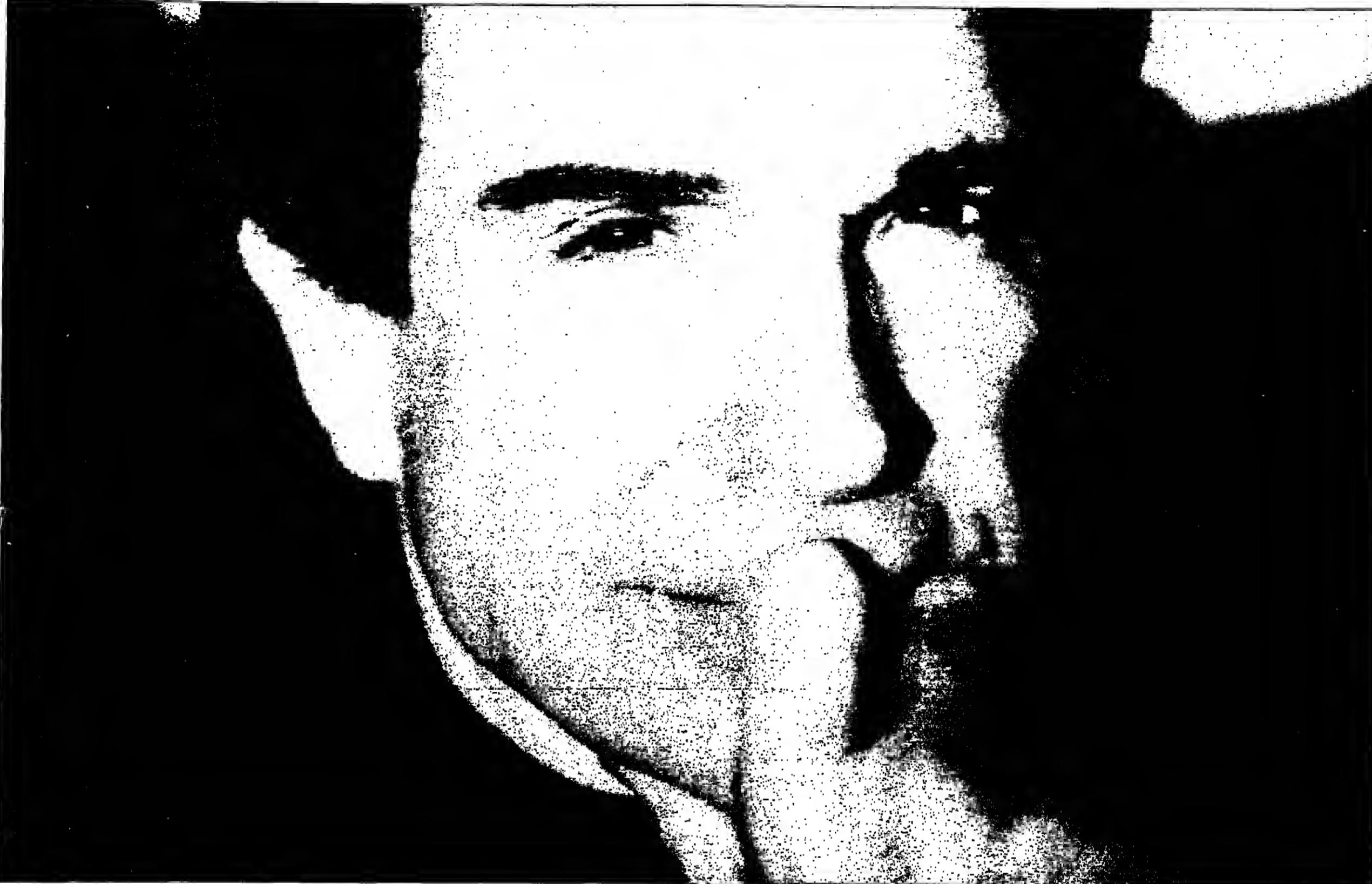
Alan Edge is the author of *Faith of Our Fathers, Football as a Religion*.



	P	Pt	GD	W	F	A	S	Home	Away	5-game form		Upcoming matches	
										W	L		
1	Chelsea	23	43	+16	7	4	17	6	4	6	1	17	12
2	Aston Villa	21	43	+14	8	2	12	12	2	12	8	W	MDW
3	West Ham	22	41	+23	8	3	1	31	13	3	5	2	18
4	Arsenal	22	39	+12	6	5	0	15	4	4	4	3	8
5	Leeds	22	36	+16	7	3	1	20	5	2	6	3	16
6	Liverpool	22	35	+17	5	3	2	28	13	4	2	5	15
7	Wimbledon	22	34	-4	7	3	1	18	11	2	4	5	11
8	West Ham	22	32	-6	6	3	2	16	14	3	2	6	9
9	Middlesbrough	22	31	+4	4	6	1	16	10	3	4	4	16
10	Derby	22	31	+2	4	5	2	11	9	3	5	3	11
11	Tottenham	22	29	-2	5	4	2	19	16	2	4	5	8
12	Leicester	22	29	-2	5	3	3	17	16	2	5	4	8
13	Sheff Wed	22	26	+3	5	3	3	13	6	2	2	7	42
14	Newcastle	22	25	-5	5	2	4	14	14	1	5	5	12
15	Everton	21	24	-11	2	7	2	3	5	3	2	6	10
16	Blackburn	22	21	-8	5	2	4	13	11	0	4	7	8
17	Cov	22	20	-10	4	4	3	15	12	1	1	9	19

WEEKEND REVIEW

COMMENT	ARTS & BOOKS	COUNTRY & GARDEN	TRAVEL
FERGAL KEANE ON THE CRISIS IN YEMEN <small>COMMENT, PAGE 3</small>	THE LAST DAYS OF ELVIS PRESLEY <small>BOOKS, PAGE 14</small>	ARE WE WRONG TO LOVE THE BADGER? <small>COUNTRY, PAGE 18</small>	OFF THE BEATEN TRACK IN MOROCCO <small>TRAVEL, PAGE 21</small>



Gabo (Rex) / OIC/PA Wire

The Beatty myth

He's got the looks, the talent, the liberal credentials. And he appears to think that what the world needs now... is sex. At 60, can Warren Beatty still believe his own propaganda?

Hi, I'm Warren," says the man with the thick, greying hair, putting out a hand to shake mine, as if I wouldn't recognise that face, shrunk down from the posters and the movie screens. Warren Beatty is in town to promote his new film, *Bulworth*, and everywhere he goes he carries the weight of movie stardom with him.

I was surprised to find that I liked the film - a romp through American politics, starring Beatty as a senator who has a nervous breakdown and starts telling the truth, in rhyme. But what now surprises me more is to find that I like the man, who has been a star longer than I have been alive, but who still has an energy that keeps breaking through his cagey interview responses. Of course, he's deliberately turning on his famous charm - he listens intently, looks into your eyes as he answers, and expresses great interest in what you think - but the kind of enthusiasm he reveals for political issues and life in case history hit a pose, since it has shaped his life.

Beatty started his film career as a beautiful boy whom the camera and the audience couldn't help but adore. I've read interviews in which he compares the way he was in 1961 to Leonardo DiCaprio now, but, frankly, can you even begin to imagine DiCaprio deciding to produce a film like *Bonnie and Clyde*, as Beatty did in 1967? That was Beatty's own project. He found the script, he got it made, and it's still one of the most memorable films of its era, an unsettling, sexy cross between French New Wave and American gangster movies.

Eight years later, he went out on the edge again to produce and star in *Shampoo*, and six years after that he hustled all over Hollywood to produce *Reds*, the ambitious, if mushy, drama about Communism that was to bring him an Oscar for best director. Now, after a run of more middle-of-the-road films, he's

gone right back into the fray, at the age of 61, with *Bulworth*. "I think it's the best movie I've ever made," he says proudly. "And I've got a lot of reinforcement for that, because that's what the reviews of the movie are saying."

Together with his blistering self-confidence, Beatty has exactly the kind of modulated voice, with gravelly low notes and long, dying cadences, that a movie star should have. He sits very still, in his black sweater and trousers and black leather Gucci jacket, and holds your gaze as he speaks. But although he seems pretty self-important in person, in *Bulworth* he lets rip and invites you to laugh at him.

Bulworth is an extraordinary film, continually teetering on the verge of self-parody, as the old white senator breaks down, breaks out and starts dressing and talking like a young black man. Jump-

BY NATASHA WALTER

ing from joke to joke, it gradually builds into a fierce political satire. Because Beatty, who campaigned once upon a time for Bobby Kennedy and then for George McGovern and then Gary Hart, is now angry with American politics: "I think the process now has become one in which, if someone wants to win an election, he can't lead, he must follow, because the technological means are such that you're gaining so much demographic information so quickly you just has to follow it, and do it as adroitly and attractively as possible - and I think basically," he pauses for a beat, "that's bunch of bullshit."

In *Bulworth*, Beatty finds a way of expressing the gap between politics and real life partly by displaying the weird dissonance between political discourse - "We stand at the threshold of a new millennium," *Bulworth*'s speeches begin - and street speech.

It's a lovely conceit, as the senator bursts into patches of rap when he should be delivering crafted soundbites, even if the sight

of Beatty rapping is sometimes hard to take.

"It wasn't hard to do," Beatty says. "It would have been a terrible mistake to try to rap well, so you aim for doggerel and you try to make it funny."

British movie-goers are used to seeing political satire in the mainstream, so maybe it won't strike people here how very odd it is that *Bulworth* got made in America now. Beatty explains that it's not a film he could have imagined making if it hadn't been for the fact that he was handed a weird, once-in-a-lifetime - even for him - opportunity. "Because of some complexities in earlier dealings with Fox, I was able to settle a lawsuit with them by doing this movie with them, on the agreement that I had complete artistic control and they have complete marketing control," he says slowly.

In other words, because Fox had pulled out of *Third Tracy*, Beatty could have sued them, but he didn't, because he wanted them to agree to do this film instead. And, although he told Fox the bare bones of the story at the outset (a man gets very depressed, falls ill, gets better, gets well again, falls ill again, tries to call off the contract), he didn't get round to telling them at first that the man would be a senator, and that the film would spend most of its energy exploring his disaffection with politics. Would Fox ever have agreed to it if he hadn't manoeuvred so smartly? "I think it would have been awkward for a corporation of that magnitude to make a movie with someone as attention-getting as I am, that basically says that big corporations are the greatest threat to our democracy," he replies.

When Beatty as *Bulworth* breaks out of the political cage, he not only starts rapping, he also starts hanging out with young black women. The sight of the 60-year-old Beatty getting on down with the 26-year-old black actress Halle Berry is something that will make a lot of movie-goers smirk. I tell him that I think he should have cast an older woman as his love interest; I'm tired

(Continued on page 2)

Why Not Be A Freelance Journalist?

As a freelance journalist you can have an exciting and financially rewarding career. A recent survey shows that freelancers can earn up to £40,000 a year writing for newspapers, magazines, trade and technical publications, TV and radio.

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TRAVEL



TOMORROW IN
THE INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY
REVIEW



Jarvis Cocker talks
to Joan Smith
about his 'Outsider Art'



Why Americans fear
death by anthrax

REAL LIFE



Confessions of a nun:
'What do I miss? Trashy
magazines and sex'

CULTURE



Is our film critic the
only man in Britain
who doesn't like
'Shakespeare In Love'?

PLUS

Life with Jacqueline du Pré
— by her char



Staten Island Ferry No 6: Tourists stand at the stern as the boat leaves Manhattan

Edward Webb

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL and include a daytime telephone number, fax to 0171 293 2056 or e-mail to letters@independent.co.uk (e-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address). Letters may be edited for length and clarity

Off the road

Sir: Deborah Orr rightly concludes that drastically curbing private car use in urban areas is essential in tackling pollution and other traffic problems ("A new line in hypocrisy", 29 January). But this needn't be as painful as she implies, as long as we avoid equating the solution to car-dependency with "improved public transport".

Better buses, trains and trams are essential. But most new car travel is not former public transport travel. While public transport travel has fallen by about 40 per cent since the 1950s, car and van use has grown over 1,000 per cent. And many of these new, longer car trips are not easily done on conventional public transport. Improved walking and cycling conditions are also urgently needed. But, however good public transport, walking and cycling become, they cannot match the "service quality" provided by the family car.

A car is like the ultimate Swiss Army Knife – a multi-purpose household tool combined in attractive, shiny packaging. People will give up this tool, but only if they are offered others which do the same jobs.

This means radical expansion of home delivery services, safe routes for school travel, improved local taxis, neighbourhood car-owning co-ops, part-year car hire and a host of similar services.

Such services will not develop in earnest until private car use is deliberately curbed. So come on, Mr Prescott, curb the car and set us free.

BEN PLOWDEN
Director
The Pedestrians Association
London EC1

Sir: Deborah Orr is right to comment on the commuting journeys made by some senior administrators and their staff. However, she misses the real point.

The matter that should be discussed is not the method of transport that they select but that the trip is made in the

first place. An organisation as well funded and resourced as the Environmental Agency should be able to find a sufficiently trained and experienced chauffeur for its chairman living within, say, five miles of the Millbank Tower in London.

The chairman of that august agency, surely a very busy man, should be able to find accommodation within the same distance of his place of work. If he cannot, then within the City of Westminster and its neighbourhood are a number of highly qualified and well connected people who could take that job on.

The chairman is, after all, responsible for the environment, and the environment is best protected by the reduction in the number and length of journeys made, not just changing the method of travel.

DAVID J HUNT
Tadley, Hampshire

Unfair to men

Sir: How grateful I am not to be a patient of Dr Brimblecombe (letter, 23 January). As a male GP I have faced all the problems she so vividly describes, but in the next consultation, I am faced with a nervous, embarrassed late-middle-aged man who has suffered from erectile problems for some years, who is frankly terrified or plainly turned off by vacuum pumps and penile injections, but who has finally plucked up courage to broach the subject with someone professional who he feels will treat him sympathetically and non-judgmentally.

I wonder if Dr Brimblecombe has paused to consider what message the Government's decision to set down limits to the availability of Viagra on the NHS sends out to men in this country. As their wives and girlfriends trail in to the surgery in their droves for smears, well-woman checks, HRT, mammography and osteoporosis screening, men are dying prematurely in their thousands from heart disease, and yet here is the Government offering them

yet another slap in the face, saying their health needs don't matter.

If rationing is an attempt to be fair to all, then the Government might start by looking at how much is spent on men compared with women, and ask themselves if the difference reflects true differences in male versus female mortality.

KEVAN TUCKER
Fence, Lancashire

Sir: Whilst a retired doctor in my 60s I had come to accept impotence as part of normal ageing.

Soon afterwards, widowed and enjoying a new relationship, the bogey of erectile dysfunction confronted me again. After psychiatric counselling, a trial of the latest new remedy, still unlicensed in the UK, proved unhelpful.

Later, a uroandrolologist established organic causation amenable to treatment. He recommended androgen replacement. Testosterone on its own failed to restore potency. Next, painful injections into the penis of another costly remedy, freely available under the NHS, proved too repugnant to tolerate.

The latest reputedly "magic" cure became available eventually to nominated specialists. Before prescribing it, my uroandrolologist sought psychiatric reassurance about the relationship with my wife. Before our joint appointment, Viagra became freely available abroad.

Tablets bought over the counter in Switzerland and taken in a low dose restored normal potency immediately, after 15 years' impotence. The benefits to the remarriage of a retired doctor in his early 70s and his pre-menopausal wife do not need to be spelt out.

The uroandrolologist recommended continuation of hormone replacement plus Viagra and the joint prescription was implemented by my GP. Later, having studied official advice, she felt bound to discontinue the Viagra; it

seemed that the androgen could continue to be prescribed, but Viagra should be sought privately.

I sought reconsideration of her decision and, after reviewing my extensive specialist investigations, she resumed NHS prescription of testosterone with Viagra, pending the Health Minister's advice and the BMA's response.

It is anomalous that a joint NHS prescription, demonstrated as curative for a seemingly irremediable organic condition, is apparently to become impermissible once again, unless the proposed "list" is reviewed sensibly and promoted on an advisory basis. It should not deny doctors the right to exercise clinical discretion individually.

NAME AND ADDRESS
SUPPLIED

Sir: Stephen Hill (letter, 23 January) is missing the point. The issue is not how often our fellow citizens "should" have sex, but how often (if at all) the rest of us should pay for them to have it.

JANET RUSSELL
Tollesbury, Essex

labelling scheme, only endorses free range and barn systems that employ high welfare standards devised and monitored by the society.

The huge success of the scheme is proof of the public's growing demand for welfare-friendly products and demonstrates that such alternative systems are financially viable.

The future of the egg industry rests with consumers. To help remove the battery cage, shoppers must vote with their purse.

PETER DAVIES
Director General
RSPCA
Horsham, West Sussex

social background, in a system which respects the able, can his own views and his party's policies be respected.

PETER MONAGHAN
Manchester

Loo role

Sir: Malcolm Jackson (letter, 29 January) misses the point about toilet cleaning.

The New Man can clean as many toilets, change as many nappies, vacuum as many floors or cook as many meals as he wants, but sooner or later the Old Woman will come along and say it's not good enough because only a woman can do these things properly.

And do you have a problem with that?

GEOFF THOMASON
Stockport, Cheshire

IN BRIEF

Sir: Surely there is no secret about "the real basis on which a British Cabinet will decide our entry into the euro" ("End this insulting culture of secrecy", 28 January)? It is the answer to the question, "Will entry win or lose us the next election?"

CHRISTINE ROE
York

Sir: I enjoyed the picture of stepladders outside Annabel Elliot's 50th birthday party (Front page, 29 January). I now look forward, in the course of time, to your coverage of the funeral of the 18th Earl of Strathmore's great aunt.

The Rev PETER KETTLE
London SW19

Sir: British Summer Time ended last year about seven weeks before the winter solstice. Why do we have to endure GMT until 28 March? If we must be subjected to it, why can't GMT end seven weeks after the solstice, at the end of next week? Daylight hours will be the same as they were when BST ended in the autumn.

Mrs SUSAN CHESTERS
Winchester

So
Mal



Generation gap: Berry and Beatty

'He believes sex is not just fun. It's the answer'

The Beatty myth

Continued from page one
of ageing stars like himself. Robert Redford, Clint Eastwood and Woody Allen, thinking they can still play sex gods. Can't he come to terms with his age?

"I could have done you a very interesting film about me and a woman who's 45 or 55 or 60," he says defensively. "But that wasn't the story here. Here, the fact that you've got an old white guy and a young black woman is the point. I don't think anyone can be left with the feeling that this is an ideal couple – it's a real mismatch. It's

meant to be." At least the film is honest about the age gap. "How old do you think I am?" Bulworth asks Berry on screen. "Sixty," she flashes back. But that doesn't stop her going in for the clinch.

It makes you smirk, because as much as Beatty is known for being a great actor and an interesting director, he's also known, of course, for his sex life. (Woody Allen once said that if he were reincarnated, he would come back as Warren Beatty's fingertips.) In any interview with him you'll hit a list, at some point, that goes something like this: Julie Christie, Diane Keaton, Brigitte Bardot, Madonna, Elle Macpherson, Isabelle Adjani...

"You get slapped a lot, but you get fucked a lot too," is how Beatty reputedly describes his wayward approach to matters of the heart in Peter Biskind's book *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*. A man who sleeps with so many women – although he has now settled down with the actress Annette Bening and their three children – might be assumed to be boringly sexist. But his films don't just frame pretty faces, they give women good roles – even *Bonnie and Clyde* gives Faye Dunaway a curiously independent, sassy voice. Reds gave Diane Keaton the meatiest part as the writer and feminist Louise Bryant. And in *Bulworth*, Halle Berry is partly just the gorgeous girl

at the club, but also the articulate woman who surprises both Bulworth and the audience by delivering a long, complicated oration when asked why there aren't any black leaders any more. "Can you handle that?" she finishes, and Bulworth's eyes gleam.

Like the real Sevenites man that he is, Beatty seems to believe that sex is not just fun, it's also the answer. He believes that the Clinton-Lewinsky affair will now have a good effect. "I think the eventual fall-out from this farce will be that it will no longer be possible for America to return to the sexual puritanism of the past," he says. "If there is a lowering of sexual puritanism,

maybe that will positively affect the divorce rate in the US, which is the highest in the world. I think the sacrificial lambs in this process are the President and people in the public eye who have been pilloried for their sexual foolishness. Many of whom," he winds up, "are friends of mine. And some of whom are me." He giggles. As Bulworth, Beatty puts the same answer to America's racial problems: "Everyone has got to keep fucking each other till we're all the same colour."

You can mock the sentiment, or sympathise, but you get the feeling that Beatty, with his "make love, not war" optimism, is now out of his time.


THE INDEPENDENT

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Talk of regulating the global economy is wrong, Mr Brown

THE CHANCELLOR of the Exchequer has a plan, and he is trying to drum up support for it in Davos at the regular big-picture talk-fest of the world's finance ministers. He wants to "do something" about the instability of global financial markets. It must be hoped that one of his fellow ministers will adopt the role of Canute, take him to a dealing-floor in Zurich and demand that the traders desist from panicking, wild fluctuation and overshooting.

When Mr Brown's plan is analysed, however, it turns out to have little substance beyond urging governments, central banks and the IMF to insist on greater "transparency" in financial markets – which is just as well. Transparency is the latest buzz-word, meaning markets should be open and based on full information so that the authorities can react quickly to any signs of trouble. Vague talk of a global financial regulator will probably mean a committee of the global great and good to talk about Very Important Things, while suggestions for a global "lender of last resort" mean beefing up the IMF's resources. Mr Brown is in favour of virtue, and against sin. Any more substance than that would be dangerous.

The increasing integration of the world economy, a process known loosely, and on the whole rather unhelpfully, as "globalisation", is something that touches on all our lives, and it is right that our politicians should be struggling to come to terms with it. Indeed, one of Mr Brown's great achievements has been to reverse entirely the Labour Party's isolationist economic policy.

So it is disappointing that he should fall prey to the temptation so often laid before politicians of wanting to be seen to be "doing something" about things about which nothing can – or should – be done. He should declare clearly that mega-mergers, such as Ford's takeover of Volvo, should not alarm us. It would not matter if, as predicted, there were soon to be just six mass car producers in the world; local markets would still be highly competitive, and the structure of the industry has changed, with the making of parts contracted out to a vast network of small, competitive companies.

And he should reject any idea of trying to regulate the flow of money around the world. There has been far too much excitement among old leftists – such as those of *Marxism Today*, who resurrected themselves last year for a one-off blast against the Labour Government – over the apparent recantation of one free-market economist who was influential with New Labour. Paul Krugman of MIT wrote last year of the need for developing countries to impose capital controls in order to defend themselves from "self-fulfilling speculative attacks" on their currencies. But that can be effective only in the shortest of terms. Most countries today need capital investment from outside, and cutting themselves off from world markets is damaging. Equally, while markets may overshoot, governments make mistakes, and markets tend to self-correct more quickly than governments.

Mr Brown's language of governmental activism risks giving credence to unworkable and undesirable schemes for a global tax on currency transactions. Instead, he should use his platform in Davos to restate strongly his belief that it is the role of governments to help their peoples rise to, and benefit from, the challenges of international competition – and that this is preferable to trying to protect people from the storm of economic



Feminism is still a cause to fight for

GERMAINE GREER has got her bus pass. She turned 60 yesterday, which gives pause for thought to those for whom it was heaven to be young in the dawn of the sexual revolution. Time for yet another appraisal of what feminism has achieved, and whether there is still a battle to be fought? Hardly. It should be universally accepted that the women's movement has achieved a great deal: that young women today owe many of their freedoms and opportunities to the courage and spirit of Professor Greer and her contemporaries.

It should also be accepted that women still have a long way to go before they can regard the battle for true equality as won. That is more controversial. There has been a backlash among men, not simply of the laddish and *Loaded* variety, but also of the confused and defensive kind (are the two kinds by any chance related?). There has been something of a backlash on the female side, too, epitomised by Bridget Jones and Aly McBeal, though heavily offset by a knowing, post-feminist irony. Revolutionary fervour among true believers has dimmed too, as the battle has moved from the fierce passions of the applecart-upsetters and academics into the more complex field of popular culture, infiltrating the ways in which the vast majority of people live day to day.

The struggle is still being carried on in the prosaic the-

atres of the industrial tribunals; the labour market has been transformed, and yet the glass ceilings still have only a few skylights in them. There is only one woman – Marjorie Scardino – heading a FTSE 100 company, for example. On the other hand, the Government this week lived up to its responsibility with a Bill to promote "fairness at work" that sought to encourage the further feminisation of the workplace. Much of the family-friendly presentation was spin, but it is significant that what would once have been regarded as strident demands for the impossible should now be seen as feel-good public relations. And, however modest, the measures for unpaid parental leave for fathers and longer maternity leave for mothers will make a real difference.

Feminism has left its mark on the English language: the style book for this newspaper insists on "firefighter" and tries to avoid "he" as a general singular pronoun. That change is hardly complete, either, but the cutting edge has gone, leaving us with the partially accepted "Ms" and a lot of pointless confusion. This week, for example, Betty Boothroyd, the Speaker of the House of Commons, required Nick Gibb, a Conservative MP, to apologise for describing Dawn Primarolo, a Treasury minister, as a "stupid woman". Mr Gibb may be a stupid man, if that is the best insult he can dredge from his limited vocabulary, but to say so is absolutely not to insult the 48 per cent of the population who are male.

How, then, is feminism to be carried forward from this stalemate of unfinished business? The important point is that carrying on the torch is not women's burden alone

– those who are looking for the "new Germaine Greer" may be looking for spokespeople (no, that is not approved by The Independent style book) of the wrong sex. This is not simply a matter of the strange inversion by which the only people who call themselves feminists these days seem to be men. It has become a commonplace to observe that men are increasingly demanding, or in some cases simply assuming, more responsibility for bringing up their children – often the same men who have strutted their New Lad political incorrectness, the same men who complain that women's rights have "gone too far".

Long after the slogan was coined in Professor Greer's byday, "the personal is political", the full implications of that are working through. If women are to achieve meaningful equality of status and respect, they have to renegotiate the whole web of intimate relationships that make up a society, and the cultural assumptions governing them. So the battle has necessarily moved far beyond the simple slogans and ideological certainties of the early days. Some of the obstacles to true equality have turned out to be as intractable as they were unexpected. It has turned out not to be so easy for working parents to leave their children in the care of others, for example, and the fear of child sex abuse has meant that men can never be trusted as women in the caring role. It will not be for a few charismatic leaders to negotiate the hazardous route; the torch of feminism will be carried forward by millions of people, both men and women. Happy birthday, Germaine.

So do you regard Shahid and Malek as fellow countrymen?

SO WHAT was your reaction when you first heard that five "Britons" had been arrested in Yemen? Alarm? Perhaps a touch of outrage? Did you feel an instinctive twinge of pity that five of our boys could find themselves at the mercy of a brutal regime? Some of you may even have felt the urge to pick up a pen and write to the newspapers, maybe even demand that the Government do something.

And then in the next breath, when you heard that their names were Shahid, Ghulam, Malek, Mohsin and Sirmad, when the penny dropped that they were not white "Britons", did you feel some mitigation of your anger? And when the Yemeni authorities announced that these not-quite-true Brits had been planning a campaign of terrorist attacks against Westerners, did you feel that everything was falling into place, that this was precisely what you expected from men with names like Shahid, Ghulam, Malek, Mohsin and Sirmad?

If the answer is yes to all or most of the above questions, I rather suspect that you are part of a majority. Not a right-wing, xenophobic majority, but a liberal one that likes to think of itself as tolerant on issues of race, and believes that by and large Britain is not a racist society.

I like to think of myself as one of those liberals. I have often compared racial attitudes in Britain to those in the United States and come away feeling that things here are a lot better. I have dismissed as unrepresentative the three incidents of racist abuse – all by whites against blacks – that I have witnessed since I started living in London a year ago.

When I drive through Shepherds



FERGAL KEANE
*Have I been too complacent about race?
Unfortunately, I think that the answer is yes*

iles to Yemen, for the British media to pay any detailed attention to the allegations of torture in that country?

For many people in Britain the words "Islamic" and "fundamentalist" mean one and the same thing. They have been huddled together in the popular consciousness to create a grossly distorted view of the religion and its adherents.

"Islam" means Ayatollah Khomeini, the Taliban, Osama bin Laden. It means wild-eyed, bearded fanatics vowing vengeance on the West. Can you imagine this kind of poisonous oversimplification and demonisation being visited on Christians as a group because of the actions or utterances of our more fundamentalist clerics?

In the case of the Yemen Five the antipathy towards Islam has been extended in a generalised assumption that the men were "up to no good". But this assumption has been made solely on the word of the Yemeni authorities,

whose record for fair dealing hardly stands up to much scrutiny. When the men's families deny that their sons and brothers were fundamentalists bent on carnage, should we not extend to them the same benefit of credence as we do to the Yemenis? Whatever they were doing in Yemen, we have no right to assume that they were terrorists.

I don't doubt that the Yemeni authorities felt they were on safe ground in arresting the five. They would have expected the indifference and pre-judgement that have characterised our national response. They also clearly feel confident in the ability of their secret policemen to secure the necessary confessions and convictions. By any reasonable standard Yemeni jails are places of spectacular brutality. Human rights groups speak of widespread torture and "grossly unfair" trials.

Consider this excerpt from a report by Amnesty International, published two years ago, on the conditions in Yemeni jails: "Such conditions have facilitated the systematic use of torture in Yemeni prisons and detention centres... government opponents and critics of the state have also fallen victim to abduction and beatings. Political suspects have been abducted from their homes or in the street and severely beaten to stop them criticising the government. Evidence suggests that these abuses were committed by the security forces..."

In other words, we are dealing with a judicial system that will use any means to secure a confession. When the detainees complain of electric shock torture, beatings on the soles of their feet and sexual violation, we must surely listen.

If the Yemen Five have signed confessions, then we would do well to ignore them. They are the kind of documents that would be thrown out of court in any half-decent judicial system. In Yemen, however, they may be used to secure the long-term incarceration – or worse – of five British citizens.

There is also the matter of the Yemeni government's uncertain motives in this matter. Can we assume that, hugely embarrassed by the bungled hostage rescue, they will be remotely even-handed in dealing with their British (with a small b, as it were) captives?

It is time our Government and media, all of us, woke up to what is happening in Yemen. In the last week there have been some hopeful signs. Newspapers and television have been giving increasing amounts of space to the men's families. But our politicians are too silent.

I have seen Labour's Keith Vaz on television, but none of the party's bigger guns. And as for the Tories who are now proclaiming a vision of a broader Britain? I await Mr Hague's intervention with interest.

This trial may prove to be a defining moment in the debate about Britishness. It is not simply a matter of crime and punishment. We have a chance to make a statement about inclusiveness, about the nature of British identity at the end of the century. This is an admirably open society in many ways. But the issues of race and identity need far more work than most of us have been willing to admit.

The writer is a BBC special correspondent

THE INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL

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NORTHERN IRELAND

Opinions about the possibility of overcoming difficulties in order to fully implement the Good Friday agreement

THE IRISH TIMES

IT HAS never been more important for the British and Irish governments to make clear they share a common determination to press ahead with implementing the agreement. At times it seems Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, is the only senior minister in either government who is prepared to defend the spirit and the letter of the agreement with real conviction. More power to her, but this is a project which demands the full attention of both governments. Northern Ireland must not be allowed to become one of the casualties of the present crisis facing the Government.

NEW STATESMAN

SINCE THE agreement was signed, it has been spattered in blood – of the 29 men and women blown up by a republican bomb in Omagh; of the Catholic and Protestant men shot, tortured and beaten to show that the paramilitaries of both traditions still command their patches. If this is peace, say the opponents of the Belfast Agreement, then perhaps it would be better to go back to war.

BELFAST TELEGRAPH

PAISLEY TOOK advantage of the issue about whether early prison releases should be stopped in reaction to so-called punishment attacks, but the only effect of his intervention will be negative. Old animosities have been revived, with untold consequences, and the whole atmosphere of the peace process has been poisoned. Paisley may think he has done a good day's work, exposing the inaction of successive governments, but he has achieved nothing that will contribute to the better, more pluralist future that most people voted for last year.

IRISH WORLD

THE POLITICAL parties and the paramilitaries are all jostling for

their position in the new Ireland. While this is a time of teething difficulties and a voyage through uncharted waters for us all, the reality is that, to create a new society in Ireland, the ways of the past have to be confined fully to the past. And while it is equally hard to teach old dogs new tricks or persuade leopards to do away with their spots, it is imperative that it is exactly that which happens.

The new era and the new optimism that it brings are demanding real change and real commitment to new ways. Those demands must be met.

AN PHOBLACHT [REPUBLICAN NEWS]

AS THE implementation of the Good Friday agreement repeatedly hits the hurdles laid by Unionists, the voice of inclusiveness does have to continue echoing. It has helped overcome the obstructionism and exclusion of the past. In the run-up to the final report on the All-Ireland bodies, abandoning the nationalist voice of consensus does not encourage Unionists to recognise the legitimacy of nationalists to be represented in the Executive. It does not help the agreement to be implemented. It does not help the cause of peace.

IRISH VOICE US

IT HAS been a miracle that the peace process has come as far as it has, given the forces aligned against it from the beginning. It would be better for all concerned if the letter of the agreement which names May 2000 as the time when decommissioning is dealt with were stuck to. The IRA should give comfort by indicating that they are not sticking their assertion of never decommissioning and that, if the agreement is enacted in full, then they are prepared to work on it. Time is running out on this perplexing problem which has haunted this process from the start. One thing is certain though: unless it is resolved it is hard to see a way forward for this process.

JORDANIAN SUCCESSION

Reaction to the King of Jordan's choice of his son Prince Abdullah to be his successor

JERUSALEM POST Israel

IT IS NOT just in Jordan's but also in Israel's interest that the next king succeed. As Hussein's interventions at key moments in the peace process indicate, Jordan plays a unique role in the region. At this critical time, Jordan and the region need steady trusted hands at the wheel. The best hands would be those of Hussein himself, whom Israelis and Jordanians hope will regain full health. As the King introduces changes in Jordan's ruling hierarchy, it is to be hoped that he will manage to pass on his strength and vision to his chosen successor as Hashemite monarch.

BOSTON GLOBE US

WHEN KING Hussein returned to Amman, he openly rued his brother's failure to give firm responses to the despots in Damascus and Baghdad. Some

skeptics may discount this palace account of the King's motivation as merely a cover for a paternal ambition as traditional as monarchy itself. But King Hussein has been able to stay in power for 46 years because he has not allowed himself to be careless about crucial matters. Jordan needs another king as canny as he.

LA VANGUARDIA Spain

THE DESIGNATION by Hussein of his first-born Abdullah as heir to the throne has placed Jordan on the threshold of a new era; in this way the monarch has put an end to an interim situation that posed grave problems for the future of a country that is key to the Middle East. Jordan, with 13 communities, among them the Palestinians, who are in majority, and three religions, continues to be a powder keg, but the succession in the Jordanian monarchy is the guarantee for continuity.

JOHN PAUL II MEETS BILL CLINTON

Views on the meeting of the Pope and the President of the United States in an aircraft hanger in St Louis, Missouri

ST LOUIS POST DISPATCH US

THERE THEY were, the saint and the sinner, meeting in the hangar. When the new millennium and new century officially arrive, Pope John Paul II may have been the last pope to serve his full reign in the 20th century and Clinton will be the first president to serve in the 21st century. In contemporary history the Pope will represent what once was and Clinton will represent what will be. The Pope will be remembered for his tireless battle to stem the changing beliefs of his flock. The President will be remembered for impeachment and his tireless effort to adjust his own beliefs.

LA STAMPA Italy

CLINTON HAS BEEN weakened in his spirit by allowing too much to his body. Pope John



Paul II has become frail, despite the strength of his spirit. The meeting was an opportunity to show once again their incompatibility. The pontiff and the American President try to control the world following two opposite principles. John Paul II calls for the end of violence as a way to solve the conflicts and looks forward to the birth of an alternative power to the United States. Clinton continues bombing each continent to reaffirm American supremacy. What makes them look alike is their ability to raise enthusiasm, more than a real consensus.

NEW YORK POST US

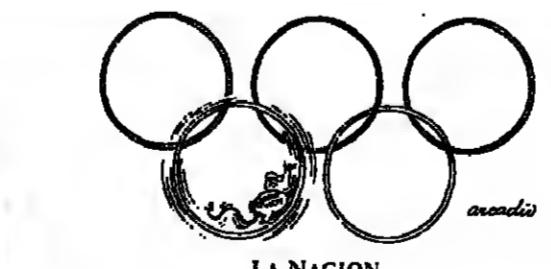
The Pope has found a receptive audience among youngsters toward whom he has directed his message with fervor. Liberals try to explain the Pope's popularity with the claim that the public loves the messenger but doesn't care for his message. They said the same thing about Reagan; it wasn't true then and it's not true now. The Pope's message is one for all faiths and all ages.

THE NEW YORK TIMES US

John Paul's criticisms of materialism were part of a trip underwritten by Pepsi-Cola and several other companies. He has won his battle with Communism, but his struggle to mount a spiritual critique of capitalism and commercial culture promises to be an even more complex task.

THE VIEWS OF THE WORLD

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MISCELLANEOUS Stories from around the world

SUN NEWS US

Elizabeth Dole vs Hillary Rodham Clinton in 2000? Is that possible? Might that be the way this nation politically turns the millennium? Might we finally acknowledge that men have done a simply terrible job, especially lately, of running this country and turn to two bright women to appeal to the electorate to choose between them? Well, we know Dole is at least somewhat interesting: she has resigned her Rep Cross presidency to run, if she decides to do so. And we know that Clinton has already sat at the right hand of presidential power, despite all the ups and downs of that public couple and of their private marriage. But is she

RESEARCH BY SALLY CHATTERTON

QUOTES OF THE WEEK



"I've never done anything decent to we're... Che, (above), singer and actress

"You have to sharpen your quill after a page of writing. Shakespeare must've gone through so many geese." Joseph Fiennes, actor

"Economics is a game anyone can play. The difficulty in economics is to separate the good from the bad and the ugly." Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England

"If they go into this thinking that it's a marriage made in heaven, they haven't got a cat in hell's chance." Russell Grant, astrologer, on the "blind date" marriage

"I occasionally have women in the kitchen, but you can never get into the staff loo." Gordon Ramsay, chef

"It's not huge, but it is nice, in a good street with smashing neighbours, and I will miss it." Peter Mandelson, MP, on his house, valued at £750,000

THE DEATH OF DAD: A political cartoon by Peter Mandelson, MP, on his house, valued at £750,000. The cartoon shows a man in a suit and tie, identified as Peter Mandelson, sitting at a desk and looking at a computer screen. The screen displays a message that reads: "The death of dad: a political cartoon by Peter Mandelson, MP, on his house, valued at £750,000". The cartoon is signed "Peter Mandelson, MP" at the bottom.

Shot down in flames

NEW YORK POST US

BESMIRCHED BY eye-popping reports of corruption, the International Olympic Committee is in crisis. It does not concern just a few bad apples. This bunch has rotted from the top down – and at the very top is IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch. In the face of the recent corruption, Samaranch has suggested changes in the Olympic selection process. One reform proposal would allow decisions to be made only by the executive board, instead of the entire IOC membership. Not surprising: That means only Samaranch and a handful of his cronies would benefit from the schmooze-fest that is the Olympic bidding process. Though the world has watched while the IOC goes down in flames, Samaranch has refused to acknowledge wrongdoing and has made no offer to resign. It's high time he gave up his control and allow this organization of international goodwill a measure of respectability once again.

MING PAO China

THE SPIRIT of the Olympic Games has been tarnished as corruption scandals over Sydney 2000 and the Winter Games in Salt Lake City come to light. These days, sports is always linked with money. The IOC has suffered from the bribery scandal. Structural defects of the committee can be blamed for the swirling corruption: the selection procedure of the country holding the Games is insufficiently transparent, voting rights are in the hands of a small circle of secretive insiders, and committee members are selected for life by the committee itself. All three elements have caused the rot, and the stench of deceit.

THE NEW PAPER Singapore

THIS WHOLE Olympics bribery scandal is shocking. No, we all know full well just how crooked the world is and how money talks in every field of activity. The international Olympic Committee members who took bribes to vote for a certain country to be host have done no worse than many politicians and business leaders.



IOC CORRUPTION SCANDAL

International opinion on the bribery allegations engulfing the International Olympic Committee over its choice of venues

THE AGE Australia

ONE OF the biggest problems in tackling corruption is defining it. When does nepotism and cronyism become bribery and corruption? There has been demonstrated corruption involved in the granting of the 2002 Olympic Games to Salt Lake City. But

what of the blatant favors asked by, and in some cases given to, IOC delegates? When the giving of favors and gifts turns into corruption can be a matter of degree, but it is principally a matter of transparency. The test is whether those giving or receiving the gifts would want it known. The possibility that it might become public is a great deterrent to bribery, which is why the media is so essential.

THE WASHINGTON POST US

FOR EVERY serious attempt to root out corruption, there's always someone ready to call a bribe a "humanitarian" gesture, a reflection of "culture" or simply a "willingness to please". We've heard all those excuses, and more, in connection with Salt Lake City. They should be on trial now.

LE MONDE France

THIS AFFAIR will enable us to return to the controllable organisations of the Olympics. We must avoid economics taking the upper hand and dictating its law to the organisational committees. The IOC must also agree to becoming somewhat more condensed; 115 members is too much. 25 or 30 would be far easier to regulate. The IOC is representative of society but not representative of sport.

AFTONBLADET Sweden

THE IOC has long looked like a fraternal order: closed, self-renewing, often completely male. The ideological superstructure is feudalism. Despite this, the Games have had an exceptional common-man popularity. Politicians have long used the Olympics in their own propaganda campaigns. Hitler and Ulbricht placed themselves in the light glancing off gold medals. The US and the old Soviet Union used the Olympics with political boycotts. Athletics' character in recent decades has changed drastically; the ideal of amateurism has drowned in the flood of prize money. The combination of fraternalism and economic power has made the IOC especially receptive to corruption.

BLIND DATE WEDDING

Comment on the marriage in Birmingham of two people who had never previously met

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

THE PRINCIPAL factor in whether a marriage succeeds is the level of commitment brought to it. While it is heartening that Mr Correll plans to "put 100 per cent behind it" the fact that he and his wife entered a competition offering a honeymoon, car and flat for a year is bound to raise suspicions. The media's artificial world is the opposite of the reality of marriage. That consists of compromises, compact and consideration, but its compensations can be huge. If as against the odds – this stunt develops into a happy union, that would be, too.

THE BIRMINGHAM POST

THE PUBLICITY stunt which brought about their wedding has debased the idea of marriage and turned it into nothing but a cheap and prurient way

MISCELLANEOUS

Stories from around the world

SUN NEWS US

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CUBA FREE PRESS

National Revolutionary Police (PNR) have arrested former political prisoner Manuel Diaz Cabrera and charged him with selling a hog to Jorge Capote of Ariza in Cienfuegos province. Various other politically incorrect citizens in this area believe the authorities are trying to fabricate a case against Diaz Cabrera so as to sabotage his dissidence with prison. He denies the charge. Diaz was released from prison last year at the request of Pope John Paul.

RESEARCH BY SALLY CHATTERTON





You've got my number. Please stop using it

Blind date wedding

ies

AT EXACTLY 27 minutes past three every afternoon my telephone rings. I pick it up. Silence. "Hello, hello," I say. Still silence. No embarrassed shuffling, no scrabbling to replace the receiver, no heavy breathing, even. I put the phone down, count 10, pick it up and listen. My mute caller is still there listening, waiting.

Telephone silence is spooky. I don't like being spooked. I dial 1471 but naturally the caller has withheld his number. In the next 15 minutes I get six more of these silent calls, and then my friend Nick telephones to ask whether seven across could be "existentialist" — it's certainly 14 letters beginning blank x ending i blank t — and I know I'm back on stream.

I've been getting these calls for the last two weeks. If I'm out when

they call, they register blank on the answering machine.

I rang the operator, who put me through to a special number for nuisance calls. Did I want to change my telephone number, asked the nuisance-call operator? Change my telephone number? Was he mad? I've had this telephone number longer than I've had my bonsai, my library card, my Bradford & Bingley account, my husband.

"Certainly not," I said. "Why can't you find out who's calling me and arrest them?" There must be some law, surely, against this sort of oral stalking. The nuisance-call operator said they couldn't find out who was ringing, but the chances were that it was a power-dialler.

I've heard of power dressing and power lunching, but power-



SUE ARNOLD
Confused visions passed before my eyes of big men in dirty raincoats, smiling menacingly

dialling? Confused visions passed before my eyes, of big men in dirty raincoats with padded shoulders, smiling menacingly as they jolted

the buttons of their S series Mercedes car phones.

"What's a power-dialler?" "It's a computer," said the nuisance-call operator. My name and telephone number, probably my address as well, were in a telesales computer whose operator was probably on her tea break. They're usually women. In her absence the computer automatically dialled the calls but wasn't programmed to give the time-honoured spiel about the ungodly millions I'd save if I were to install a fitted kitchen, double-glazing or a loft extension within the next two weeks. "But why can't they switch their computers off when they're having their tea break?" I protested. "And anyway, how did they get my number?"

Here's the sinister bit. The last time I ordered anything by mail

order I must have forgotten to tick the box saying "I do not wish my personal details to be passed on to any other sales organisation", advised the operator. "What tick? What box? What mail order?" I squealed, starting to feel paranoid.

I don't order things by post. I live

in

four floors above a retail mecca called the King's Road, for heaven's sake. I don't need to order things by post.

"Do you ever get junk mail, catalogues, financial advice, that sort of thing?" asked the operator. "Yes, of course I do, dozens of them, and I chuck them away unopened."

"Ah," said the operator. "That's the problem. If you don't read the brochures you won't get to the refusal box. I can request that your number be removed from the major telesales lists and with any

luck most of your power-dialled calls should stop."

Next morning I got my usual quota of junk mail. I tore open the first envelope, containing a flimsy home health mail-order catalogue with a picture of a smiling blonde on her tea break. They're usually women. In her absence the computer automatically dialled the calls but wasn't programmed to give the time-honoured spiel about the ungodly millions I'd save if I were to install a fitted kitchen, double-glazing or a loft extension within the next two weeks. "But why can't they switch their computers off when they're having their tea break?" I protested. "And anyway, how did they get my number?"

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There was a whole section on dental hygiene, with ultrasonic denture cream and a stainless steel tongue-scraper to cure halitosis. You could scrape your tongue as you're sitting on your portable bidet in your friend's weekend cottage. Please God she has a lock on the bathroom door.

I never got as far as the refusal

box — what's a little power-dialling between friends anyway?

THE SATURDAY PROFILE

JACK STRAW, HOME SECRETARY

The man who could be king

LET US paint a picture in the heroic style, of the court of King Tony. The fair-faced young PM himself sits radiant and assured in the centre. To his right, his Chancellor, the dour but handsome Brown, rests one hand on the throne, and in the other holds a scroll. Captain of the Guard, rough-hewn Jack Prescott, pike at ready and belligerent expression on his face, stands on the other side. And a group of gaudy, happy young courtiers — men and women — spill out from behind.

So the eye is not immediately drawn to the dark, jeans, bespectacled figure in the corner. He, alone, is sitting at a desk writing, his clerk hovering nearby. This man wears neither ruff nor gorged hose, and strikes no attitude. Yet he clearly wields serious authority over the affairs of the realm. When, later, the dancing begins and Leicester and Essex dance the Notting Hill Reel, he will make his farewells and return to his family with tales of the court — just as another might relate a visit to an eccentric uncle, or to the zoological gardens. At 10 of the clock, one imagines, Mr Secretary Straw retires to bed.

But it is this latter-day Walsingham, not his showy colleagues, whom the world now tips as the man who might take over should Tony suddenly decide to spend all his time in the Seychelles. Brown has too many enemies. Cook needs a year in rehab. Prescott does not aspire; but Jack Straw is the coming man. So we should do well to get to know him better.

Certainly Labour's enemies are concerned by him. In a column in yesterday's *Daily Telegraph*, the writer — complaining about Straw's championing of equalising the gay and heterosexual ages of consent — compared him to Beria, Trotsky, the Gestapo and Robespierre. (It won't bore you with the tortured logic that leads from Beria to the defence of equal rights for gay people. It is clearly a side of the NKVD that most historians have somehow missed.) To many on the left, meanwhile, Straw's tentative suggestion that some teenage mothers might look more positively at the option of having their babies adopted, smacks of Keith Joseph eugenics. Both sides portray him as a puritanical authoritarian.

What most commentators do agree about, however, is that Straw has reversed one of the great political paradigms: that it is much easier to talk the talk in opposition, than it is to walk the walk in government. The post of Home Secretary is usually thought to be an unpromising launch-pad for further ambitions, fraught as it is with all kinds of contingent dangers. Yet chief constables adore him (I know, I've spoken to them), reformers generally believe he is on their side, and Middle England and the council estates unite to approve his policies.

Yet, less than three years ago he was nearly a write-off. In the debate that followed the resignation of the prisons' chief Derek Lewis, Straw seemed maladroit and

badly prepared for his confrontation with the troubled Tory Home Secretary, Michael Howard. After the election, knowing journalists speculated, he'd be moved aside. (Straw later revealed that a bad attack of influenza had made it very hard for him to hear Tory interventions, and to respond.) In the event, Tony Blair took no notice of the gossip.

An anonymous neighbour on the Essex council estate where Straw was brought up in the Fifties, once described the intense young boy as "priggish". This is often the

LIFE STORY

Born: John Whitaker Straw, 3 August 1946, Buckhurst Hill, Essex.
Educated: Staples Road Primary; Brentwood School; University of Leeds (LLB). Was called to the Bar in 1972.

Political career: President of the National Union of Students 1969-71; Islington councillor, 1971-78; Special adviser to Barbara Castle and Peter Shore (1974-77); MP for Blackburn since 1979; Shadow Cabinet member 1987-97.

Other jobs: Called to the Bar, 1972, practised 1972-74; Granada TV (World in Action) staffer, 1977-79; chairman of governors of Pimlico school 1995-98.

Family: Married his first wife, Anthea, in 1968, marriage dissolved 1978, one daughter (deceased). Married Alice Perkins in 1978, son and one daughter.

What he says about his job:

"I don't want to preach. But in government you do have a platform and you must use it."

What they say about him:

"Cunning" (Barbara Castle); "One of the government's all-round heavy hitters" (Alastair Campbell).

Hobbies: Walking, cycling, soufflés.

Admires: Responsible parents and the Routemaster bus.

tough-on-crime politician, is in reality no paradox at all. In the Years of Revolt '68, '69 and '70 there were two trajectories for a young left-winger to follow. The first was to join the Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation and try to bring governments down by street protests. The other was to join the long march through the institutions, beginning with the official student body the NUS. Straw, then a law student at Leeds University, chose the latter. When he became president of the NUS, it was as a chancer of student protest, not a creator of it. Trotskyists hated him for his effectiveness, for the way in which he turned yells into briefing documents.

The task suited the man. Straw is not a romantic revolutionary, or a gesture politician. He hasn't the gift of oratory as has, say, Neil Kinnock or Tony Benn. His movement on the platform, or in the House, is economical. He is suspicious of ego and his vanities are minor; he is not half-monster as some big politicians are. Michael Heseltine is his polar opposite.

Unlike Tony Blair, Straw is a party man. Having left the NUS he worked the Labour version of Route One to goal: local councillor, political adviser, parliamentary candidate. His mentor was the extravagantly coiffed Barbara Castle, whom Jack advised in the Seventies. When she retired from the Commons, Straw succeeded her in Blackburn, almost by divine right of succession.

A party man, then, but definitely not Old Labour. Straw held a sequence of shadow portfolios under Neil Kinnock, whose reforms he completely supported, and can claim to have been the instigator of the dropping of the old Clause 4 of the Labour Party constitution, the resolution to do so having originated in his own Blackburn constituency. In this Straw was considerably in advance of many colleagues.

He is, however, only a demoblairite. Straw does not like Liberal Democrats much, is an opponent of electoral reform, and was not delighted by Scottish devolution on terms that left England still subsidising Edinburgh. If he is gung-ho for Europe (which he once opposed as vehemently as any in the Labour Party), he has kept very quiet about it. Yet it is an interesting comment on Straw's commitment to the collective, that Liberal Democrats working with him on the Cabinet Committee have found him pretty diligent.

The Home Secretary has sometimes found himself in the company of even more unlikely allies than the Lib Dems. Jack Straw and Paul Dacre, editor-in-chief of Associated Newspapers and scourge of adulterers, met each other when Dacre was editor of the Leeds University student newspaper, *Leeds Student*, and Straw was student-union president. Some have inferred this from, and from Straw's stance on crime, that the Home Secretary is a moraliser in the old-fashioned sense. This is wrong. Straw's own father (Walter, an insurance clerk and conscientious



In an age of spin, the Home Secretary is straight, blunt and very clear

David Rose

objection) left home and Jack's mother, a teacher, when Jack was 10. Straw was divorced after a marriage contracted when he was just 21. He is not, in that sense, at all judgemental. Straw is a man of his generation.

Certainly a family man, given to camping holidays with the kids, which may be why he was close enough to his son William to persuade the boy down to the local nick when the "Home Secretary's son tried to sell me drugs" story broke. The skill and straightforwardness with which Straw deals with William's little error earned respect across the journalistic spectrum.

But he does loathe crime with an "I was poor, but I never mugged an old lady" kind of zeal. He is impatient of the dilletantism of the professional middle classes, and identifies with the council tenant driven to distraction by lousy neighbours. The term "public space" connotes something as valuable to Jack Straw as "private space" does to the most ardent Tory. He regards its violation by drunks, pimps, vandals and drug-takers as being akin to burglary or assault. It was this toughness that helped to neutralise the law-and-order issue for Labour at the last election — a feat that

had previously proved to be impossible. This populist toughness is linked to the dark side of Straw. He values individual liberty too lightly, and sometimes situates himself where "ordinary people" are, regardless of whether or not they are right.

Nine months ago, the author Gitta Sereny revealed that she had paid the child murderer Mary Bell a sum of money for co-operating in a book about what made Bell a killer. The murders had happened 30 years before, when Bell was 11. She had reconstructed her life and in no sense could she have been said to be "profiting" from her crime. But this was not how it felt to the relatives of those killed, to the tabloid press and to the Home Secretary. Straw's open letter to *The Sun* (of all papers!) was a model of illiberalism.

Straw has also defended the secret services, stating this week that he has no wish to see the files compiled about him when he was young. The arguments here are complex, but it would have been reassuring had the Home Secretary not hinted that, on reflection, maybe MI5 was right to have kept him and others under surveillance. Nevertheless, such straight dealing does tend to undermine Baroness

Thatcher's argument that Straw's actions over the extradition of General Pinochet were a smack of political calculation. No one whom I have met who knows Jack Straw agrees with this judgement.

The other, related question mark over Jack Straw concerns a possible lack of imagination. It is not just that he was a law student rather than, say, a student of art history. After all, so were Tony and Cherie. And Bill and Hillary. And we all know Bill's got a lot of imagination. But Jack Straw is not a weaver of political dreams. But neither is he a product of spin. Straw has always put his faith in simple briefers: guys who know what the policies are and who see it as their job to tell people. Conversations with Straw himself lack that frustrating, oblique quality that characterises discussions with those who are perpetually working the percentages. He is straight, blunt, occasionally dismissive, and very clear.

And I have hardly heard a bad word said about him since the May 1997 election. Of all the members of Tony Blair's court, he is the one most in possession of the elusive qualities of kingship.

DAVID AARONOVITCH

THE PICTURE of Joyce Grenfell on the jacket of a recently published volume of her letters shows her writing in her study, looking relaxed, soft, feminine and really quite beautiful. It comes as something of a shock.

So utterly convincing was Joyce's gaucherie in the St Trinian's movies, and the well-meaning but hopeless nursery teacher of her most famous monologue, that it is sometimes difficult to conceive of another existence in which she is not wielding a hockey stick and facing the camera with an embarrassed, toothy smile.

The nursery teacher is a typical Grenfell character, full of misplaced enthusiasm, gradually losing patience with her recalcitrant charges — "George, don't do that!"

but in a very genteel, English way. It is a beautifully observed piece and, like so much of Grenfell, says more about a certain kind of middle-class Englishwoman than any amount of Bejeman's Joan Hunter Dunnery.

Joyce was a kind of poet of niceness. This probably came naturally to her since she was by all accounts every bit as kind, caring and, well, nice as most of her heroines, the difference being that in Joyce's case, acts of generosity were achieved with quiet efficiency.

Janie Hampton, who edited her letters, tells how Joyce paid school fees for nephews and nieces, and occasionally gave a car or a house or, bizarrely, in one case a dishwasher, to a friend in need. (Elvis gave Cadillac, Joyce household

appliances. How very English.) "We are fearfully rich," wrote Grenfell, "and of all the forms of self-indulgence, giving is the pleasantest."

But it is Joyce's hugely influential body of work — often disregarded or seriously undervalued — rather than her saintliness, that qualifies her for inclusion in this series; the more so since it stemmed from such unlikely beginnings.

If anybody's success could be said

to be inadvertent it is Grenfell's. She started performing her sketches and songs in revues only in her late twenties, in 1938, after friends whom she had entertained at dinner parties urged her to "have a bash".

Joyce's gentle guyng of women of her own background — débutante, Paris finishing school — was perhaps not that remarkable. But how she ever acquired her ear for the cadences of lower-middle-class and

working-class conversations remains something of a mystery.

The pieces in which Joyce stepped outside her own class have been criticised for being patronising, but this is absolutely unjustified. In a monologue called "The Telephone Call", a 30-year-old in Sydney who has given up her job as a shopgirl to look after her aged father tries to explain to her boyfriend why she cannot go to the pictures with him that evening. "I asked Letty to come over and sit with him, but she's got the kids and Frank and it's a hell of a way over here, and they do take him out driving in the car on Sundays... I pot him first because I have to... But you know what I feel about you." The impatient boyfriend dumps her. It's poignant, it feels true and, what is

more, it has a strong feminist streak.

It would be fanciful to place Joyce Grenfell, who died in 1979, in the vanguard of the women's movement, although many of her pieces pointed out inequalities between the sexes, but she was certainly a standard-bearer for the kind of character-based comedy performed by people such as Victoria Wood and Barry Humphries. She was also, happily, not completely without malice.

A wickedly funny piece

THE WEEKLY MUSE

BY MARTIN NEWELL



A blue moon due tomorrow night
When January shuffles out
And February lumbars in.
Ill-tempered as a case of gout,
His chamberpot of stale rain
Brimful of lukewarm winter days.
A half-day closing firebug sun
To set the sulking clouds ablaze.

The disappearing apple.
There's a subject for a poet.
The dreaming English orchards
Were the places where they'd grow it -
The russet and the Blenheim
Or the rough old d'Arcy Spice -
But the supermarket buyers
Think they wouldn't look as "nice"
As those waxy plastic objects
Which you see them putting out,
And as all their adverts tell you:
Choice - it's what it's all about.

More sex pervading everything...
The media's full of sex
And prurient fascination
With concave and convex.
The latest thing to crop up
On an over-stuffed agenda
Is the Old Vic's new production
On the theme of the pudenda.
This yonic veneration,
Though it isn't quite a play,
Asks the thought-provoking question:
"If it talked, what would it say?"

Vaginal conversation?
Not the sort of thing I'd try;
But even if it happened
How the hell would I reply?

A perfume firm, American.
Has launched a certain winner.
I gave some to my girlfriend
Last evening over dinner:
The subtle scent of "Essex"
Is sweetly charismatic,
The high note's Harwich Harbour.
The undertone's emphatic -
A Billericay boot fair,
A whiff of car-interior;
A hint of Thorpe-le-Soken,
And something far superior -
An Elmstead Market feed-shed?
A dog on Clacton sands?
My hostess smelled of lager.
I was putty in her hands.

DAYS LIKE THESE

30 JANUARY 1829

SIR WALTER SCOTT,
novelist, writes to
Benjamin Croker:

"Miss Seward knew Dr Johnson well... There was a story she told me respecting the Sage's marriage with the widow Porter. He had been quite candid with the lady, and had pointed out to her all his disadvantages. I told her, 'that I was as poor as a rat, and destitute of any settled profession; that I was blind and ugly, and moreover of a family which was dishonoured by the execution of a near relative.' She replied most candidly that all these drawbacks made no difference to her choice; that she was not much richer than myself, and she was resolved to trust to heaven's blessing and my talents for a sufficient income; that if I was unsightly, she was no longer young, and it was not for my good looks that she gave me preference. Finally that, although she had not had an uncle who had been hanged, yet she enjoyed the

relationship of more than one near relative who richly deserved it."

1 FEBRUARY 1901

CISSY, COUNTESS
OF DENBIGH,
records the last journey of
Queen Victoria (pictured)
who died on 22 January

"We steamed out, and took up our position between the last British ship and the first foreign ships of war, on the south side of the double line down which the procession was to pass. The day was one of glorious sunshine, with the smoothest and bluest of seas. After a while a black

torpedo destroyer came dashing down the line

signalling that the *Alberta* was leaving Osborne and from every ship, both British and foreign, boomed out the minute guns for close on an hour before the procession reached us. The sun was now (3pm) beginning to sink, and a wonderful golden pink appeared in the sky and as the smoke slowly rose from the guns it settled in one long festoon behind them, over Haslar, a purple festoon like the purple bannings ordered by the King.

Then slowly down the long line of battleships came eight torpedo destroyers, dark gliding forms, and after them the white *Alberta* looking very small and frail next to the towering battleships. We could see the motionless figures standing round the white pall which, with the crown and orb and sceptre, lay upon the coffin. As slowly and as silently as it came the cortège passed away into the haze; with the solemn booming of the guns continuing every minute till Portsmouth was reached."

IAN IRVINE

THE WEASEL

Charles I was beheaded 350 years ago but in this cozy realm you'd hardly know it. Most people seem keener on making marmalade

NOW HERE'S a thing. No one knows who decapitated King Charles I, an event that took place 350 years ago today, shortly after 2pm on 30 January 1649. The axeman was obviously a pro, since the monarch's head was parted from his body via a single blow to the third vertebra. However, since they were understandably wary of retribution, both the executioner and his assistant wore heavy disguise. As CV Wedgwood points out in her enthralling account *The Trial of Charles I*, they were not only masked but also equipped "with hair and beards that were evidently not their own". For a king to have his head chopped off is bad enough, but it adds insult to injury when the deed is performed by someone wearing false whiskers.

It is a classic example of British understatement that this event, surely the most significant constitutional drama since the Norman conquest, is being marked by an exhibition consisting of two small display cases in the Banqueting House on Whitehall. Charles passed his final hours in Inigo Jones's architectural gem.

A historian has noted that the condemned monarch would have heard "workmen cutting planks and driving nails" as they constructed a temporary scaffold adjoining the building. Ironically, before stepping through a window in order to reach the scaffold Charles would have passed under Rubens's ceiling allegory, which depicts Wise Government (a sultry beauty) holding a hilt over Intemperate Rebellion (a cringing wretch).

Though the exhibition is modest in

scale, it merits a detour. The Archbishop of Canterbury has lent a pair of embroidered gloves worn by the monarch on the day of his execution. There is also a nicely crocheted cap which kept the regal head warm - while still attached, I hasten to add. The Society of King Charles the Martyr (still active after three-and-a-half centuries) has donated a splinter of wood hacked from the royal coffin.

But the most creepily thrilling object is the King's death warrant, allowed out of the House of Lords for the first time. It turns out to be a small piece of parchment, six deep and slightly wider than the page you're currently holding. Though it is much faded, it is possible to read the flowing script: "Charles Stewart King of England is... to be put to death by the severing of his head from his body."

Third in line among the 59 signatures that follow, in large, clear handwriting, is "O. Cromwell".

Oddly enough, the last name in the list has been partially erased. According to CV Wedgwood, the signature of one Gregory Clement was half-heartedly scratched out when he was caught in bed with his maid-servant. Since his name was still legible, Clement did not escape the chop when the Regicides were hunted down following the Restoration in 1660. Cromwell himself had been dead for two years, so the Royalists had to satisfy themselves with digging up his body and displaying the Protector's head on a pole for a quarter of a century.

Of course, the dramatic event that took place on a freezing afternoon 350 years ago scarcely stirs much interest today. Or does it? This morning, the Society of King Charles the Martyr is holding its annual service of commemoration in the Banqueting House. At the same time, outside in Whitehall, a group called Movement Against the Monarchy plans to hold a "Party to



Celebrate the Beheading of Charles I. Let's hope no one loses their head.

IT'S THAT time again. Like one of the weird sisters from the Scottish play, Mrs Weasel has been hovering over a seething cauldron, while cackling strange incantations:

With orange from Seville, a pan you fill.

To help it congeal, some pectin you steal.
Then bubble awhile with Tate & Lyle.

This year, sad to relate, her spell went somewhat awry. Half way through the first batch of marmalade, she rechecked her recipe and let fly an anguished shriek: "Draaai! I put the sugar in too early!" (I give a bowdlerised version.) Pressing on regardless, she bottled the result, which stubbornly refused to gel. Disconsolately, she shook a jar and the chunks of peel whirled round inside like goldfish.

I was promptly dispatched into the drizzle of south London for more preserving sugar. In every supermarket, it was the same story: an empty shelf in the sugar section, where marmalade maniacs had beaten me to it. Eventually, I tracked down a cache of seven packets in Sainsbury's hidden behind the demerara and Mrs W resumed production. This time, she hurt it. Not enough to spoil, but quite sufficient to raise her temper to the "rolling boil" specified in the recipe - though this usually applies to the marmalade rather than the cook.

Mercifully, on her third and fourth attempts, my increasingly sticky consort was more successful and the kitchen table filled with a helterskelter batzillion of jars. As she pinged a rubber band to secure the cover of the 47th and final jar, their creator suddenly erupted: "It's all that good, why don't the Spanish make it themselves?"

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But one aspect of the Fields legend is unassalable. The index of this sprawling but entertaining volume lists 21 references under "penchant for alcohol" and a further three under "hatred of water". A major pleasure of the book is Louvish's generous quotation from the great curmudgeon's dialogue. No one in cinema had a more distinctive way with a line.

You can even hear his voice in a four-word quote from the film (said to be his best) which gives the book its title. It occurs when he accidentally fires a gun near his wife: "Fields (a little eagerly): 'Did I kill yer?'"

SPIRIT OF THE AGE

PAUL VALLEY

An organised faith in humanity

I HAVE wanted for a long time to meet Nicolas Walter. He is the chap who writes combative, dare I say tetchy, letters whenever I suggest that there may be a link between the decline of religion and the growing sense of insecurity and anxiety in the modern world. Morality, he insists, can exist independent of the Judaeo-Christian tradition in which our secular values grew. It would be nice to think so.

The irony about the avowedly non-religious Ethical Rationalist Humanist Secularist Movement to which he belongs is that it resembles nothing so much as a religion itself. This is not its official title, but you have to include that many abstract adjectives if you are to cover the range of its belief without leaving anybody out. This is largely because it has been given by as many splits and schisms as any religious denomination could respectfully hope for.

Mr Walter is part of the cadre of militant activists who are not happy with the mere drift of society towards greater secularisation. They want to push it along and tidy it up, so that all the anomalies of our religious heritage are placed in the intellectual museum where they belong.

There was a huge stack of books on

the ground floor of the offices of the Rationalist Press. Nicolas Walter, after 20 years at the organisation's helm, is

about to retire and is moving out of the flat at the top of its Islington office. It

has not been an easy place for him in

recent times. Chemotherapy for a

cancer has severely crippled him and

he can make the arduous progress

down and up the stairs only once a day.

Next year he will move to the country,

as with as many of the books as he can

fit into his new place there.

But his atheism is far from a sublimated railing against a malign divinity responsible for his unhappy infirmity.

Mr Walter is, in the circumstances, a

rather jovial, bearded chap, with a

ready laugh and an agreeable manner.

Prominent figures in the movement

are aware of the paradox. Mr Walter

gave me a copy of his association's

magazine, *New Humanist*, which carries a wealth of articles with titles such as "Jesus the Fanatic" and "Another Look at Miracles". The lead piece on "The Future of Unbelief" began with the quote: "One of the most obvious and regrettable things about contemporary humanism is that it has become quaint - a movement out of step with the times it has helped to create."

Partly, the writer said, this is because it insists on fighting again battles it has already won: the war against religion, the battle for intellectual freedom, the defence of moral choice, and so on. But he also said that organisations that call themselves secularist, rationalist or humanist nowadays seem old, tired and sadly ineffectual.

Most significantly, humanism has been supplanted as the Church's most effective critic - by, of all things, liberal theology.

But it has another problem, too. The movement's beliefs extend well beyond mere utilitarian notions about achieving the greatest good for the greatest number of the population. It makes statements - about the goodness of humanity, freedom, mutuality, art, music, laughter and love - that, ultimately, are based on assertions and instincts rather than empirical fact. Its faith in humanity is, in the end, no less a matter of belief than is any religion.

Nicolas Walter disagrees. "Humanism is not a faith. I don't have *faith* in freedom. I just want to be free: there's a difference," he says. Similarly,

the feelings aroused by the majesty of nature share nothing as many suppose, with the instinct of religion: "I feel stirred, and brought to tears, but it's not by the transcendent. Reverence for the universe, as Einstein said, makes no sense. I just try to explain it in biological terms. Why are we musical? What, in Darwinian terms, is it for? Why does it help?"

Darwinism is a double-edged sword here. Biogenetic structuralism now suggests that human beings are genetically programmed for music, language, dance... and religion. We insist on making patterns - of harmony, rhythm and meaning.

More than that, epidemiologists now suggest that people who believe in God are happier than average and live longer. Religion, it seems, has an evolutionary point.

"Yes, but civilisation goes through stages - and we've reached the stage where we can think for ourselves," says Mr Walter. And there are battles yet to fight. "Christianity still has privileges enshrined in the law. There is the issue of Islam and state schools. And there is all the mumbo-jumbo of the New Age. There are still lots of things still worth arguing about - and if organised humanists don't, no one will."

Whether or not it is "organised humanism" - or the majority of the population's rootless drift along the "line of least resistance" - which has been the real force for secularisation, is matter for another debate. I await the letter with interest.



Atheism in the open air: a humanist wedding ceremony

The trial of the vanquished

CLASSIC

PODIUM

I DESIRE today to speak particularly of equal justice, because it is an essential of individual liberty. Unless there is law, and unless there is an impartial tribunal to administer that law, no man can be really free. Without them only force can determine controversy, as in the international field today, and those who have not sufficient force cannot remain free. Without law and an appeal to a just and independent court to interpret that law, every man must be subject to the arbitrary discretion of his ruler or of some subordinate government official.

The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States and every pronouncement of the founders of the government stated the same principle in one form or another. In England the progress towards a definite law, administered by efficient and impartial courts or tribunals, was slow and uncertain. The common law developed slowly and became clear and definite only after many centuries. For a long time the courts were anything but impartial, and the actual application of the law was often unfair and unjust. But reverence for the principle must have existed, or it would not have been transported so early to the shores of America to become the dominant theory of government in the colonies.

with discomfort the war trials which have just been concluded in Germany and are proceeding in Japan. They violate that fundamental principle of American law that a man cannot be tried under an *ex post facto* statute.

The trial of the vanquished by the victors cannot be impartial, no matter how it is hedged about with the forms

of justice. I question whether the hang-

ing of those who, however despicable, were the leaders of the German people will ever discourage the making of aggressive war, for no one makes aggressive war unless he expects to win. About this whole judgment there is the spirit of vengeance, and vengeance is seldom justice. The hanging of the 11 men convicted will be a blot on the American record which we shall long regret.

In these trials we have accepted the Russian idea of the purpose of trials - government policy and not justice - with little relation to Anglo-Saxon heritage. By cloaking policy in the forms of legal procedure, we may discredit the whole idea of justice in Europe for years to come.

In the last analysis, even at the end of a fateful war we should view the future with more hope if even our enemies believed that we had treated them justly in our English-speaking concept of law, in the provision of relief and in the final disposal of territory. I pray that we do not repeat this procedure in Japan, where the justification on grounds of vengeance is much less than in Germany.

Our whole attitude in the world, for a year after VE Day, including the use of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, seems to me a departure from the principles of fair and equal treatment which have made America respected throughout the world before disillusionment may be longer.

As I see it, the English-speaking peoples have one great responsibility. That is to restore to the minds of men a devotion to equal justice under law.

John 14:150



(The strange fact is that Mrs W doesn't eat marmalade.) "Well, the Portuguese still make the quince jam called marmelada, from whence our word derives," I replied in my annoying male way, "but they don't seem to like Olde English in Seville." I thought of cracking the old one about oranges lacking appeal, but one glance at Mrs W's pugnacious face told me that it was not a good idea.

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THE SATURDAY ESSAY

Can anyone control the flow of ideas in the modern age?



JOHN SUTHERLAND

There is no question that, over the next few decades, the Net will destabilise states and may even start wars

"So you," Abraham Lincoln said on meeting Harriet Beecher Stowe, "are the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!" The book in question was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stop the book, kill the idea at source, and you may change the course of history - the dream of every ruler less benevolent than honest Abe over the last 50 years.

It's not easy to do, and the stakes are high. The KGB, aware of the counter-revolutionary power of books (even home-made samizdat), registered every typewriter in their 10-time-zone territory. Xerox copiers, fax machines and computers were as jealously guarded by the party apparatus as plutonium. The result? The Soviet Union drove itself back into the information dark ages and lost the Cold War. Control ideas too harshly, and you strangle the creative forces that a modern state needs in order to progress. Let them loose and all the genies are out of the bottles, causing 20 sorts of hell.

Ideas move history. The new containers that new ideas come in are taken seriously by the governments that wish to stay in power. It is always instructive to look at the communications media that the state is currently most exercised to control. The means of control are not always those classically associated with the iron bang on the door and men in black. Over the centuries Britain and the United States - non-totalitarian states with liberal traditions of free speech - have shown themselves remarkably efficient in balancing repression and tolerance. It's a balance that is imperilled every time a new medium appears on the scene.

When it appeared in the 15th century the printing press was subjected to immediate regulation. Initially in Britain it was applied by the Star Chamber, Stationers' Hall, and the Lord Chamberlain. In France a complex system of "privileges" or licences was imposed. Traditionally only two potentially dangerous books, the Bible and *Hansard*, have been subjected to long-term control by licence in Britain. The great university presses, Oxford and Cambridge, established their half-millennium cultural dominance with the Bible privilege. If you want to test the continuing strength of the *Hansard* monopoly, go into the visitors' gallery at Westminster with a pencil and note pad. You'll be shaken down quicker than a Yemeni going through airport X-ray security with an Uzi in his underpants.

The printing press was dangerous for the state in a number of ways. It allowed the dissemination, on an unprecedentedly massive scale, of dissenting ideas. It invaded the state's monopoly of "intelligence". It was a potent instrument of mass education, and a literate population (particularly a self-taught population) is difficult to keep in line. It facilitated the circulation of subversive, blasphemous and pornographic materials, all of which corroded the moral foundations of society and its hierarchies.

Unlike dirigiste France, Britain quickly realised that the control of the printed word was best achieved by a network of quasi-legal controls, working in a semi-autonomous way. Copyright, the most elegant of laws, was devised with the Queen Anne copyright Act of 1710. The basic idea of copyright requires an intellectual leap - the notion of "immaterial property". The copyright in the words I am currently writing though you buy them for less than £1 under the auspices of *The Independent* belongs to me - even after 1. *The Independent*



The coffee-houses of 18th century London were clearing houses for radical ideas and political gossip

Mary Evans Picture Library

has paid me for them. 2. you have purchased them, in their material form, from the newsagent. Repeat a substantial part of this article in print, and I can sue you for infringement of my rights. Xerox them and - if I am incredibly small-minded - I can still act against you. What then do I own? The arrangement of those words. They can be sold a million times (for your dreams, Sutherland) I still own them.

Copyright was, for the authorities, a beautiful legal instrument. Convert creativity into property and the book-sellers (and behind them the authors) will set up the necessary mechanisms to control production and distribution. And British publishers, as Orwell dismally discovered when he vainly tried to get them to accept

Animal Farm, are by nature "guileless". You want to know what "repressive tolerance" means? Look at the "bible" of the publishing trade, *The Bookseller*.

With the protections of copyright came another beautiful concept - that of "the public domain". Once a work's immediate commercial value was exhausted, its ideas became everybody's and nobody's - like the medieval common, the open seas, and the skies above our heads. Shakespeare - the man of the millennium - belongs to us all. So, one day, will Salman Rushdie by current EU statute, 70 years after his death; of old age and in bed, I trust). The balance between copyright-protected works and public domain, painfully worked out over the half-millennium since print shook everything up, has served liberal democracies very well.

The Internet has changed everything. Worse than this, it is changing things faster than laws and mechanisms can be devised to control it. The authorities are worried and have reason to be. There is no question that, over the next few decades, the Net will destabilise states and may even start wars.

The history is well known. It began, in the Sixties, as a military communications system. The Americans foresaw that a pre-emptive nuclear strike on Washington could render the US a headless giant. "Arpanet" was devised as a network by which military and government computers could talk to each other; if only two machines were left. Since much military research is done on US campuses, academics started using the network. Thus was e-mail born. At this point, the communications were limited to linear text.

None of this mattered to the general public in the Seventies. Computers were expensive gadgetry that only the government, big business and universities could afford and only pointy-headed boffins could operate. Personal computers were as fantastic a concept as personal space shuttles. All this changed in the early Eighties when Adam Osborne in America began selling his "juggable" computers in America with bundled software, at a price (then around \$2,000) that the businessman and academic could afford. In Britain Clive Sinclair began selling his little black computers at a price that the nerdy schoolboy could afford (around £150), if he didn't buy himself a BMDX.

These early affordable generations of computer, with their 32K or 64K of Random Access Memory, were not Net-connectable. But RAM grew year by year, driven by the need for more powerful business and games applications. In 1991, Tim Berners-Lee, a scientist at Cern (the physics research centre in Geneva) devised a means by which images and lateral links could be added. Hypertext was born. The initial idea was that the Internet (as it was now called) would allow scientists to exchange "big science" ideas and the visuals that go with them.

Finally, in the late Nineties, there was convergence; the fat was in the fire. The computer available to the general public in High Street shops at around £1,000 was powerful enough to hook into the Internet. The World Wide Web was born. It was an explosive conjunction that put advanced states in the Western World in the anguished position of the KGB in 1988 or the Star Chamber in 1488 - how to control the apparently uncontrollable?

The Web is a threat in four main sectors. First, it drives a coach and horses through copyright legislation. Judging by past experience, what I am now writing will be scanned in and on the Net tomorrow, zooming around between various chat-room subscribers. The Web is no more obedient to the regulations of international or national copyright law than the Barbary Coast was to His Majesty's Customs and Excise officers. Everything is public domain on the Web. And that everything is growing. In the very near future, it will be possible to scan in and download film, TV programmes and whole CDs. Piracy at that point will be uncontrollable, and rampant to an unprecedented degree.

Almost every day you can read articles in the financial supplements wondering at the extraordinary "over-valuation" of Net-related stocks on the Nasdaq list. How is it that AOL and Yahoo! can be valued so highly when they haven't turned in a cent's profit? Because at some point in the near future, there is going to be the biggest gold rush in history, when all that copyright-protected intellectual property (films, TV, books, music) becomes freely available (ie fully pirable as free download) on the Web. The Klondike and the California Gold Rush will be as nothing in comparison. It will be champagne for the holders of the right stocks. Black Monday 1929 for the rest of the market. The destabilising implications for capitalism are awesome. It's unavoidable and it's coming soon to a stock-market near you.

The second danger posed by the Web is that having been originated in the US and in a community (science) where English is the lingua franca, it is an extraordinarily potent instrument of imperial hegemony. The Web is American (which is why there is no national domain marker equivalent to ".uk" for their e-mail addresses). Statistics are fluid, but something between 50 and 70 percent of communications are from and to American sites.

What then does Tony Blair's "National Grid of Learning" mean? Something equivalent, in cultural terms, to Argentina adopting the dollar as its currency.

Thirdly, and most worrying for authorities, the Web makes nonsense of the mechanisms that are in place for controlling subversive ideas.

These assertions can be demonstrated by three little experiments. Sit down on your computer, log on to your Net service provider, and call up whatever search engine it offers. Experiment One: search for "David Shayler". You will get a website listing for MI5's current Enemy Number One. Stop at this point. Go forward, download some of David's dodgy stuff, and you could find yourself in cootavention of the Official Secrets Act.

Experiment Two: choose your favourite pop group (Oasis, Nirvana, REM). Search. A couple of clicks will get you to a site providing a comprehensive library of lyrics and music. Stop at this point. Go forward, and you could find yourself handling stolen goods.

Experiment three: Search on "fetish", or "bestiality". Select among any one of the

10,000 porn sites for what looks "bardest". Stop at this point. Go forward, and you could find yourself on the wrong side of any number of laws - most seriously the Child Protection Act. A judge at Cambridge Crown Court, in passing sentence on a lecherous surfer on Wednesday, ruled that downloading images from the Net "amounted to making copies and breached the Act". The fact is, millions of Web users, less prudent than Independent readers, won't stop. How many laws can you break at your computer console? A lot more than you can with a motorcar and almost as many as you can with a gun.

One of the films doing well at the moment is *Enemy of the State*, a paranoid thriller. Its narrative gimmick is that the new world of electronics - notably the Web - delivers the Orwellian nightmare of totalitarian control by total surveillance of the population. Individual liberties, dependent as they are on individual privacy, are doomed.

It's nonsense. The Web does not principally threaten individuals; it threatens the state and its rulers - just think what samizdat did to the Soviet Union, and imagine the threat posed by the World Wide Web to the rulers of China. Even the President of the United States needs to worry. Bill Clinton's impeachment woes are substantially Web-driven. Matt Drudge broke the original stained-dress story on his site, when the news magazines wouldn't handle it. After that, every salacious detail was spilled on the Web before being picked up by the "legitimate" press.

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What defines the Nineties woman? Well, no one thing, really. I suppose we know more about more things. We're far more pressurised these days. You know - career, curve. We have to be superstars on all fronts. Everything we do has to be a success.

What do you think that is the case? I'm not entirely sure but I would say that we have witnessed a fascinating progression from the terribly serious feminist in the Seventies, to the careerist, power-shouldered, half-breaking women of the Eighties, to the typical Nineties women who would certainly seem to be a rather harmless party girl.

BAROMETER

SEAN O'GRADY

Homophobe of the week?

Jamie Cann, MP for Ipswich, the man who this week turned Hansard into a gay *Kama Sutra*. During the Commons debate on the age of consent he began with some rather jovial remarks about his own sex life, in which he confided that, at 52, "sex counts for 1 or 2 per cent of my life nowadays - on holiday, perhaps 5 per cent". However, he then went into an obsessive and detailed description of homosexual erotic practices which provoked widespread embarrassment. His distaste for such practices was more than apparent. Now, there's one politician who'll never get shafted.

Nazi pigeon of the week

Nazi-trained bombing pigeons were the target of British covert operations during the last war, according to some recently released MI5 files. Heinrich Himmler, mass murderer and president of the German National Pigeon Society, had the bright idea of recruiting these birds to carry intelligence from German sympathisers in England. Our spies got to find this out from "captured pigeon personnel".

The shabby Nazi plan was thwarted by the Army Pigeon Service Special Section, comprising two patriotic peregrine falcons. Indeed, a couple of pigeons were captured, and the secret files note that: "Both birds are now prisoners of war and are working hard at breeding English pigeons."

Never in the field of conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few birds of prey.

Criminal of the week

Have you seen this cut-out? Staffordshire Police have had some trouble tracking the "flat-cap robber". He has been bolding up banks, but his nondescript appearance has helped him to evade detection. The police have now resorted to carting this life-size cardboard cut-out around shopping malls. Keep 'em peeled.

Beetle of the week

Have you seen this insect? The Asian longhorn beetle is extremely destructive and capable of wiping out many of our fine trees, such as the horse chestnut and the willow. It must be found. Anyone can join the Insect Service Special Section. Here is a life-size cut-out to help you...

Image of the week

At a rally for Catholic youth during his visit to the United States, Pope John Paul II was presented with a St Louis Blues hockey stick and jersey. Nice to see that the pontiff hasn't lost his sense of humour.



WENDY HOLDEN lived the Ab-Fab lifestyle on *Tatler* magazine and decided to draw on the torrid, solipsistic world she discovered there for her recent novel, *Simply Divine*. As a result she has now found herself the subject of the same glossy pages; she has become the literary equivalent of an It Girl, gracing the pages of tabloid and broadsheet alike. The media attention may be because the subject is close to many a journalist's heart and they are curious to determine whether, in fact, they make an appearance in the book. Wendy, however, claims that it was due to her willingness to be proactive in publicising the book, "and the fact that there wasn't a third world war going on. Plus January is a miser-

able time and I think people want glamour and fun."

Is the book really a roman à clef?
No. I don't think that is what people are interested in really. It's meant to be good fun and a jolly read, a bit of a romp.

That's what the average reader is after?
Absolutely. I don't think the public is anxious to read about journalists in London. I think they just want to read something that's fun.

But you did draw on your own media experience?
Oh, sure. But it was such good material. The really bizarre things

in the book were too bizarre to make up. But the characters are only amalgamations of different people rather than portraits of real people I knew and worked with.

Are you consciously mocking the fashion business?
Well, yes. Of course there is a certain amount of mockery. But there is a fine line between mockery and celebration.

Does that constant desperation for something new and better define the Nineties reader?

COLD CALL

SALLY CHATTERTON RINGS

WENDY HOLDEN

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You would characterise Nineties women as being harmless?

I think the R Girls are symbols of our age. They've made a fortune out of being famous for being famous. They've got a lot out of life.

What will the millennium heroine be like?
I hope the stereotype of the unhappy single girl will die. Hopefully she'll stop thinking in a gender specific way. In fact I think that she'll be a go-getter.

Lady Glendevon

AS THE only child of William Somerset Maugham, perhaps the century's grumpiest writer, and Syrie, his wife turned society decorator, Liza Glendevon's life was complicated even before its conception. As the First World War was declared and Maugham left England for France (where he would meet and fall in love with the disastrous Gerald Haxton), Syrie, then still married to Henry Wellcome, became pregnant and Maugham accepted responsibility. In the event, Syrie Wellcome miscarried; a second pregnancy quickly followed, and produced their daughter, Elizabeth Mary, by emergency Caesarean, on 5 May 1915.

Maugham married her mother two years later, in Jersey City. As Bryan Connell notes in *Somerset and All the Maughams* (1968), Maugham's attitude to his daughter would ever be complex: his wife would later accuse him, "When you asked me to have a child, you said you wanted a child but you lied; you didn't want a child, you only wanted to be a father." His daughter's birth seemed to underline the threat Maugham felt from women. He wrote to a friend, congratulating him on the birth of his son, "We can all write books, but it is given to but few to produce a male child. I have never been able to manage more than a daughter."

The Maughams' doomed match soon came apart. Separated in 1925, the couple divorced four years later. Syrie Maugham was given £600 per annum to bring up their daughter. She tried to ignore her ex-husband's vindictiveness, according to David Herbert's *Second Son* (1972), for Liza's sake: "Syrie was determined to show him she could earn her own living and support both herself and their beloved daughter..."

Her mother's strange state – somewhere between hostess and businesswoman – introduced Liza as she became known (after her father's best-selling novel *Liza of Lumbeth*), to the glitter of the day: potential customers for Syrie & Co's trademark lined Louis Quinze chairs and plush lambskin carpets. This was the environment in which Liza Maugham grew up: Noël Coward (who called her Liza Boo) com-

posing songs in her mother's house, Cecil Beaton photographing her, and Beverly Nichols gossiping about her: "Liza is a perfect darling," effused Beaton of the 13-year-old. "I adore her. She is unique, wise, sophisticated and yet very childish." David Herbert declared unequivocally that Syrie's "adoration of Liza was touching and her whole life revolved around her".

Photographed in a characteristically Surreal pose by Madame Yevonde in 1935 – displaying her ivory skin and bright blue eyes – Liza Maugham remained firmly in the fashion spotlight. She dressed with such outré designers of the day as Charles James, gave numerous interviews, and, when on one occasion she drove in a sports car through London, it was reported in a newspaper under the headline "Hatless in Berkeley Square" as a daring fashion gesture.

In 1936 she married Vincent Paravichini, son of the Swiss Minister to the Court of St James, at St Mar-

ies of the writer, Maugham pronounced him "a most beautiful young man".

A son was born in October 1937: "Liza thinks herself very clever to have produced a son and she wants to call him Nicholas Somerset," noted her father. While her husband, now a naturalised British subject, served in the Pacific and Italy, she spent the war in the US (like her father), staying with the Doubledays on Long Island where she contacted measles, pneumonia and chickenpox whilst pregnant with her second child. (Resentful relatives of the Doubledays would knock on her bedroom door and say, "Don't you know you are going to die? Of course you are. I heard the doctor say so.") She survived, gave birth to a daughter, Camilla, in March 1941, and went to work in the British Library of Information in New York.

She also visited Hollywood, where

she was taken out by Errol Flynn, who dined her on wild boar killed with a bow and arrow, while a bulging-eyed Bette Davis cornered

vice in the Commonwealth and Scottish Offices. A son, Julian (the present Lord Glendevon), was born in 1950; another, Jonathan, in 1952.

Syrie Maugham died in July 1955, nursed by her daughter; her death heralded Willie's decline into senility" as Connell writes. The year before Maugham had formed a company to take over the Villa Mauresque and given Liza the shares. This legal ruse now became, in his mind, a means by which he would be thrown out of his own home. It was just one example of a childish illogicality influenced and encouraged by Alan Searle (WSM's secretary and lover, whom he would adopt as a son) who saw Liza as a rival and feared for his financial future after Willie's death... According to Searle, Willie wrote a new will each week.

Relations reached a nadir in 1962 with the imminent publication of Maugham's memoirs, *Looking Back*, in which it was rumoured he denied – "in a characteristically reptilian statement" as Rebecca West saw it – paternity of Liza. He did not, but he did declare her to be illegitimate. Scarcely had this furor died down when, insisting he was near pecury, Maugham sold 35 paintings at Sotheby's; unfortunately nine of them had been assigned to Liza in return for her signing away rights to his royalties.

She could not understand what had turned her father against her:

"Dearest Daddy, you are making me quite miserable by refusing to see me... How can you suddenly turn on me when I have done absolutely nothing?" The situation may have been explained by a bitter comment made by Maugham to Alan Searle: "The trouble with those two [the John Hopes] is that they're too damned happy"; and by the fact that Maugham was already suffering the effects of Alzheimer's.

Partly persuaded by her husband, Liza Hope sued Sotheby's for the proceeds of the paintings belonging to her. Peter Wilson, the auctioneer, informed the press that this was "a family dispute" and nothing to do with us." The publication of *Looking Back* did little to help matters.

In 1962 began the extraordinary legal action in which Maugham's



The only child of Somerset Maugham – a portrait by Madame Yevonde

Camera Press

When she drove in a sports car through London, it was reported in a newspaper under the headline 'Hatless in Berkeley Square' as a daring fashion gesture

garet's, Westminster. "Is it a C.B. Cochran first night?" mused the Express' William Hickey. "No, it's an issue of *Vogue* come to life." Dressed as Schiaparelli, she was "bride of the month", surrounded by royalty, aristocracy, Osbert Sitwell, Elsie de Wolfe and Marie Tempest. At the reception at the Swiss Legation, a cake designed by Oliver Messel was the centrepiece. Maugham's wedding present was a portfolio of shares, a house near Henley, and the lease of 15 Wilton Street – which had been decorated by Syrie.

The couple honeymooned in the Villa Mauresque, lent to them by Maugham for the occasion. He appeared to approve of the match: Paravicini was considered one of the best-looking men in London and, as Ted Morgan records in his biography

her at a cocktail party and told her, "Please do thank your daddy for Midred; it was like having an acting textbook to guide me" – Davis's appearance in the film version of Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* had established her as a star.

Liza and her son and daughter returned to England in 1944. Paravicini, now a lieutenant-colonel in an armoured-car unit serving in New Guinea, had proved a gambler and a drinker when he returned to the US in 1943, suffering from malaria. After Liza and her children returned to England the following year the couple divorced. In 1948 she married Lord John Hope, the 36-year-old son of the second Marquess of Linlithgow, a stolid Conservative politician who would take the title of Baron Glendevon in 1964 after ser-

lawyers issued a statement announcing their client's decision to sue to deny legal recognition of Lady John Hope, saying she was the legal daughter of Henry Wellcome, and proposing to revoke all gifts to her, including shares in the Villa Mauresque company under Article 950 of the French civil code. In a perverse inversion, he further stated that his daughter had never taken care of him.

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was heard in Nice in June, and the court declared her to be Maugham's legitimate daughter and ordered the adoption of Searle to be annulled. Maugham appealed, and lost. A joint statement was issued: "Mr W.S. Maugham and his daughter, Lady John Hope, are happy to state that all differences between them have been settled."

Maugham died on 15 December 1965, although it took Alan Searle 24 hours to inform Lady Glendevon (as she had become) of the fact. She finally inherited the Villa Mauresque. The house was subsequently sold for development.

Liza Glendevon's life with her second husband was indeed a happy one. She was not, however, a typical Tory wife, but always maintained her own spin on the events in her

extraordinary life. David Herbert thought her "a kind and thoughtful wife, and an understanding and gentle mother". It is evident she inherited few of her irascible father's genes. Living on the Wilton estate, and in Guernsey, the couple "enjoyed the friendship" in Hugo Vickers's words, of senior members of the Royal Family. Lord Glendevon died in 1996; his widow returned to London to live in Eaton Square.

PHILIP HOARE

Elizabeth Mary Maugham: born Rome 1 September 1915; married 1936 Vincent Paravicini (one son, one daughter; marriage dissolved); 1948 Lord John Hope (created 1964 Baron Glendevon, died 1996; two sons); died Hopetoun, Lothian 27 December 1998.

James Towler



JAMES TOWLER, who was Chairman of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee for Yorkshire from 1979 to 1985 and for all North-East England 1985-87, was a man of strongly independent mind. He represented railway passengers in a skilled and high-profile way, and played a crucial role in the 1980s in saving from closure the Settle and Carlisle railway.

Bob Cryer, the late MP for Keighley, described him as "a 19th-century Whig with a radical edge". Towler was recognised by press and public across the North of England as the strongest-ever official defender of rail users, while being seen by some (but not all) British Rail managers, and by Conservative ministers, as an unwelcome persistent critic. He enjoyed recounting how one told him, "The trouble with you is that you travel on too many trains." Managers, he realised, did not travel on their trains enough. His approach to public transport needs of ordinary people remains of central importance in the era of the Labour government's "New Deal for the Railways".

Until Towler's appointment in 1979, BR had had an easy ride from the "toothless watchdog" committees. He dramatically raised the Yorkshire TUCC's profile and ended its subservience to BR, breaking a practice that had given the TUCC a poor reputation in the Beeching era for not resisting closures.

An early success was the transfer of diesel High Speed Trains on the Sheffield-London route, left out of Intercity modernisation in the 1970s. "The Age of the Train" under Sir Peter Parker. Working with Sheffield City Council, Towler cajoled BR out of a "Waiting for Godot" stance that only electrification of the Midland Main Line would bring better services. Subsequently he did much to encourage growth in West and South Yorkshire local rail services, working to smooth over difficulties between the local Passenger Transport Executives and BR.

With the contentious Serpell Report on Railway Finances publishing options for major network

cubbacks in 1982, closures were no longer on the agenda. Towler's TUCC found itself handling objections to the axing of the Sheffield-Penistone-Huddersfield line serving south Pennine communities, which would have cut the main line from the south into Hull. Both continued in service after negotiation with local authorities, Towler working behind the scenes.

When Towler first faced up to BR's proposed closure of the Settle-Carlisle line, the 72-mile "finest scenic route in England", there was a sense of doom over rural railways. There were few at first who believed it could be saved.

Towler's crucial role was that he slowed down the process by challenging BR to produce justification for closure, which it never could, and bought time for the national movement to gather to save the line. He found legal faults in BR's procedures, and closure notices were reissued more than once: what he called the "Battle of the Small Print". And he rigorously and relentlessly presented the facts of a complex and controversial public issue to an impatient, often in different and largely ignorant government.

While more politically favoured chairmen were regularly reappointed, Towler was refused a new term at the height of his reputation in March 1987, causing angry Commons exchanges. He had taken his

committee's legal powers and duty seriously, and it had "strongly and emphatically" recommended the closure of the Settle-Carlisle line be refused. Both BR and the Department of Transport wanted him out; a hapless consumer affairs minister, Lord Lucas, obliged.

After his report to ministers in December 1986 and his subsequent sacking, he was elected Chairman of the Railway Development Society in Yorkshire, cheerfully describing his job as having been privatised. He carried on in his polite, patient but determined way, speaking for passengers and fighting to save the Settle-Carlisle line. After a confused attempt by the Government in 1988 to "privatise or close" it, Paul Chanon, the Transport Secretary, harassed by a set of transport disasters, refused closure on 16 April 1989. Towler told the story in *The Battle for the Settle & Carlisle* (1990).

Towler lived to see the reversal of rail cutbacks: the Settle-Carlisle line now carries modern local trains serving reopened Dales stations and is again being heavily used by freight. Less happily, he watched the emasculation of the TUCC after his dismissal, initially by weaker appointments. Their reorganisation in the 1994 rail privatisation led to imposition of a deadening bureaucracy and departure of staff and members knowledgeable about railways. In July 1998 it was, however,

announced that users' committees will move to the Strategic Rail Authority and be strengthened.

Born in 1932, Towler was the only son of a West Riding businessman. He left school at 16 and followed his enthusiasm for films by working as a junior cinema manager before joining the family engineering business. He was later chairman of a plant manufacturer and a director of Pennine Radio, West Yorkshire's first commercial station. He was an enthusiast for light entertainment, and had a long association with The Stage, reporting on performers throughout Yorkshire, as well as reviewing television in later years. An opponent of Britain's EEC entry in 1973, he studied at Strasbourg University from 1927 to 1938 before being appointed to Basle, where he spent the bulk of his time until he retired at 70. He showed a great commitment to the students, running a hostel for theological students with his sister Louise. In 1968-69 he served as Rector.

From 1948 he also served as Professor of Protestant Theology at the Sorbonne, as well as teaching courses at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Paris and at the Waldensian seminary in Rome. But his greatest influence came from his guest lectures around the world and his writing. In his long career he completed more than 100 titles (one of which describes the origins of the Christmas tree). He was received by Popes Pius XII, John XXIII and, above all, Paul VI. The Protestant theologian Karl Barth used to say teasingly, "Oscar, on your gravestone it will say, 'Here lies the adviser to three popes'!" Cullmann's conversations with Paul VI gave rise to the plan for an ecumenical institute in Jerusalem, founded at Tantur in 1972.

Cullmann had attended the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65 as an observer and had recorded his impressions of the Council. Thirty years later, in 1993, he was the first Protestant to receive the Pope Paul VI Prize, presented to him by Cardinal Carlo Martini of Milan.

Despite his firm commitment to ecumenism, he was not a supporter of a new "World Unity Church" to bring together all Christians. His 1986 book *Unity Through Diversity*, which summed up his lifetime experience, argued instead for a "community of autonomous churches".

As he declared in 1972, ecumenism aimed at fusing the churches would not only destroy the true unity in the Holy Spirit, but would lead Christians of different denominations to the temptation to abandon the foundations of their faith and to seek the principle of unity outside this faith... Only an ecumenism that respects the diversity of charisms can unite us in Christ, while at the same time leading the Christian churches of all denominations back to the sources of the Christian faith.

He also wrote a number of works focused on a theological understanding of ecumenism. Many of these concerned relations between the Protestant and Catholic Churches, such as *Catholics and Protestants: a proposal for realising Christian solidarity* (British publication 1989 in English). His last book was *Prayer in the New Testament* (1994).

Cullmann argued that what is most distinctive about the New Testament is its view of time and history. Running through the course of world history has been a relatively narrow stream of sacred history, at the key point of which is Jesus Christ. He believed this provided the clue to understanding the whole of history.

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The current troubles of the World Council of Churches, where many Orthodox Churches have been questioning their continued membership over the perceived liberal Protestant agenda of the organisation, demonstrate how timely Cullmann's message remains.



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FELIX CORLEY

Oscar Cullmann, theologian: born Strasbourg, Germany 25 February 1902; Professor of New Testament and Ancient Church History, Basle University 1938-72; died Chamonix, France 16 January 1999.

Oswald Jones



though many of his subjects were friends.

He was brought up in the London Welsh world, born to a Welsh father and a Scottish mother in Paddington in 1929. At an early age he acquired a box camera. Later he enrolled at the Regent Street Polytechnic School of Photography and did his National Service in the RAF. "I wanted to be a photographer so they made me a mechanic," he later remarked.

After National Service he joined the staff of Condé Nast, where he enjoyed working on architectural features, but avoided fashion photography. He left in the early 1960s, to work from a studio in St John's Wood. (It was there he met Michael Hastings.)

In Zanzibar he photographed Che Guevara surrounded by bodyguards. "I did not approach too closely." Che was there to support the revolution against the Sultan. A year later Jones had talks in Dar-es-Salaam with rebels from the Congo with a view to photographing the conflict there. This came to nothing. Many of

the South African mercenaries in the conflict were also bearded and one leaned across the table and said to Jones, "It will have to come off."

When he returned to London in the 1970

John Milnes-Smith

THE ARTIST and architect John Milnes-Smith was one of the pre-Second World War generation who took part in the optimistic resurgence of British art in the 1950s.

He was trained as an architect, studying from 1934 to 1938 at the Architectural Association, and qualifying in 1939. During the war he served with the 14th Army and in Burma. After it, he worked in private practice as an architect and became a specialist in planning regulations, specifically in the field of the conservation and preservation of historic buildings. From 1963 to 1978 he worked with the Historic Buildings Division of the Greater London Council.

Milnes-Smith began to paint in the late 1940s in a representational style, but soon moved towards abstraction. In 1951 he took part in a pioneering exhibition, "British Abstract Art", at Gimpel Fils in London. He participated in many group shows in the 1950s including the Lodon Group, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, the Redfern Gallery, Lords Gallery and the Artists' International Association (AIA). In 1952 he was included in "The Mirror and the Square" at the AIA, an exhibition encompassing both social realism (the "mirror") and constructive abstraction (the "square").

In 1957 he was one of the exhibitors in "Metavision, Tachiste, Abstract" at the Redfern, alongside most of the key exponents of British abstract painting of the time. Held the year after the first wave of American Abstract Expressionism arrived in Britain, as part of "Modern Art in the United States" at the Tate Gallery, it can be seen retrospectively as a seminal showing. In 1958, another influential Tate exhibition, "New American Painting", strengthened the impact of the Abstract Expressionists.

Milnes-Smith's paintings of the 1950s have a European flavour, close in spirit to that of the Scottish artist William Gear, a member of the Cobra Group, and the French artist Alfred Manessier, both of whose paintings utilised a linear armature containing areas of strong colour. In a review of Milnes-Smith's first one-man show at the New Vision Centre Gallery in 1959, Ian Forbes White wrote that "the forms of Milnes-Smith's paintings are held together by a framework of black lines, and for the most part squares of luminous colours positively flying out of a background of cloudy 'ays or ochre browns'".

By the late 1950s, Milnes-Smith's paintings had become more emotional and gestural – his response to the pernicious influence of the Abstract Expressionists. Like them he worked on a flat surface, but his "arena" was relatively domestic in scale – a table

rather than the floor, in a room in his home. His works were modest in size compared to those produced by the Americans but, as Marina Vaizey pointed out in the catalogue for his 1990 show at Austin Desmond, "their explorations of space are grand as well as intimate".

In 1958 Milnes-Smith was included in "British Abstract Painting" at the Auckland City Art Gallery, New Zealand; in 1961 he was one of "Eight British Artists" (Terry Frost, Patrick Heron, Peter Lanyon, Alan Davie, Elisabeth Frink, Kenneth Armitage, and Jack Smith were the others) at the Jefferson Place Gallery in Washington, DC. He was a member of the Central Committee of the AIA 1962-64.

In the late 1950s he began to produce collages, combining torn scraps of printed and plain paper with crayon lines reminiscent of the graphicism of Roger Hilton. He used ephemera such as old gallery invitations, paint charts, fragments of documents, scraps of discarded drawings and paintings, even attaching paper and card to the background support with pins. These works, made intuitively, have an almost casual, effortless effect, as well as great vitality and sophistication. His collages of

His collages – using old invitations, paint charts, scraps of drawings – have an almost casual, effortless effect

recent years retained this freshness and sense of elan.

In 1963 he had a one-man exhibition at the Drian Gallery. It was the beginning of a long association, and he exhibited there regularly for over 20 years. In 1980 he was one of the artists selected by Halina Nalecz, the Drian's director, for the collection she donated to the Gdańsk National Museum in Poland.

Milnes-Smith last exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1996. Ten years earlier he showed with England & Co with another artist in "Reflections of the Fifties", and later in the same year took part in "Post-War British Abstract Art" at Austin Desmond, where he had a retrospective in 1990. Throughout the 1990s he contributed to numerous group exhibitions at England & Co, the last in August 1998.

He was genuinely – and generously



Explorations of space 'grand as well as intimate' Jane England

interested in the work of other artists, and with his wife Monica attended gatherings and exhibitions throughout his life. He constantly looked at other artists' work, and subtly absorbed the influence of those he particularly admired. He was attracted by the work of European artists such as Jean Dubuffet, Auguste Herbin, Asger Jorn, and Alfred Manessier and among British artists, the work of Prunella Clough, Victor Pasmore, Eduardo Paolozzi and Alan Davie. Davie was one of the first artists he came to know well; other artist friends included William Scott, Fred Uhlman and F.E. MacWilliam.

John Milnes-Smith was consistent in his interests and aesthetic: late last year he was delighted when his wife gave him a small work by Prunella Clough he had admired at an exhibition at the Annye & Co, the last in August 1998.

He was always revising his pictures, painting over them again and again, their surfaces growing ever richer and more textured. His own work continually evolved and developed – he painted until the end of his life.

JANE ENGLAND

John Milnes-Smith, artist and architect; born Laleham, Middlesex 8 August 1912; married 1939 Monica Bishop (one son, one daughter); died London 20 December 1998.

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works by other artists, and moved drawings and small paintings around his home so he could study and see them afresh. He looked at his own works in the same way, sometimes using a mirror to see them from a different angle, putting recent pictures into old frames and hanging them on the stairs so he could see them in passing and decide on any changes. He was always revising his pictures, painting over them again and again, their surfaces growing ever richer and more textured. His own work continually evolved and developed – he painted until the end of his life.

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works by other

Fascism - the feelgood factor

Roberto Benigni is Italy's favourite funny film guy. And he thinks there's humour to be found in concentration camps. By Geoffrey Macnab

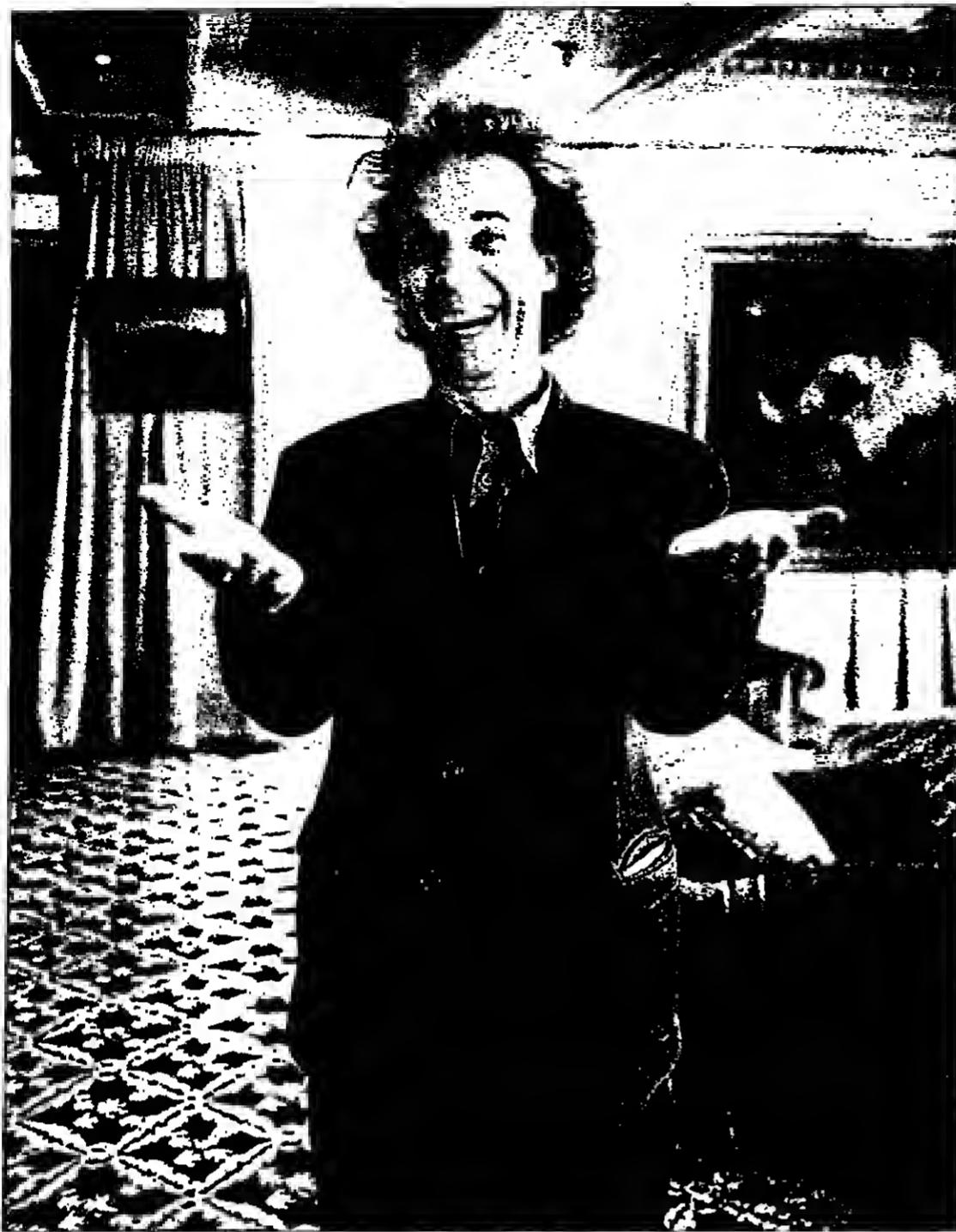
Roberto Benigni dispenses kisses in liberal fashion. The effervescent writer-director-comedian, a household name in his native Italy, stands perched on the edge of international stardom thanks to his new movie, *Life is Beautiful*. He is so excited by the prospect that he is ready to plant his lips on anything that catches his eye. He was even recently caught embracing his ferocious American distributor, Harvey Weinstein. "I love to kiss women and men," he explains. "And animals. Also vegetables... and I kiss trees too!"

You may have spotted Benigni behind the wheel in Jim Jarmusch's *Night on Earth* (he played a motor-mouthed Roman taxi driver with an unholly passion for sheep) or as the eccentric convict in Jarmusch's *Down By Law*. You may have seen him Peter Sellers' pastiche as a young Clouseau in *The Son of the Pink Panther*. In *Life is Beautiful*, his trademark exuberance is only slightly dampened by the grim nature of the story. He stars as a Jewish-Italian waiter thrown into a Nazi death camp along with his young son Giorgio (the Jackie Coogan-like newcomer, Giorgio Cantarini).

Benigni has worked with children before. Back in 1979, he appeared alongside a small army of four-year-olds in Marco Ferreri's *Criedo Asilo*, an anarchic film about a kindergarten teacher and his unruly charges. Ferreri, the director of *La Grande Bouffe*, is best known for his obsession with food and sex. Benigni remembers: "Before each take, he'd mumble a few instructions. He'd say to me, 'Roberto, explain to them in their own language that the world is a horrifying thing; that we're all here to suffer. Tell them also that it can be wonderful too.'" Benigni would oblige. Then Ferreri would yell ACTION! and the 50 or so kids would run amok.

Although *Life is Beautiful* was made in a very different style ("I completely prepared everything - there was nothing down to improvisation"), Benigni acknowledges Ferreri's influence. It was through Ferreri that he met Primo Levi. "His books changed my life," Benigni says of the great Italian writer and concentration camp survivor. "I was not the same after I had read them."

Whereas Levi chronicled his experience of Auschwitz in *If This Is A Man* here, a sombre, heart-rending detail, Benigni's movie opts for Chaplin-style slapstick and verbal gags. Guido, the quick-witted Jewish waiter, forever posing trick questions to his favourite customer Dr Lessing, ("I like riddles," says Benigni, reminiscing about how he and Umberto Eco used to send each other jokes and word games through the post). The rub comes later on when the doctor tells him a story about a duckling. By then, Guido and his young son are inmates in the Nazi concentration camp. Lessing



Roberto Benigni, director of 'Life is Beautiful'; top right: 'The Son of the Pink Panther'; below right: 'Life is Beautiful'



William Laxton/Outline

is the camp doctor. "It's a very dramatic moment. He is asking Guido to solve an enigma about a duckling, but the enigma is really about his life, which is in danger."

It comes as a bolt from the blue to see Lessing the humanised cultivated figure from the first half of the movie, transformed into a Nazi. "That happened in real life - normal people, doctors, professors, were forced to join the SS. They'd try to hide the reality, otherwise their brains would explode... to hide themselves behind some-

thing - in this case, it was the riddles." Benigni was inspired to write the character of Lessing in this way by Primo Levi's recollections about meeting a Nazi chemist, Levi, a chemist himself, had tried to engage the Nazi in conversation, "but the Nazi chemist was talking only formulae, like riddles".

Interviewing Benigni is a disconcerting experience. He pulls faces and puts on funny voices. He tries to make you laugh. Then, when you ask where the comedy is

in Nazi genocide, his features cloud over as if this is the most difficult puzzle of all. The answer lies at least partly in his own background. Benigni's father was a Catholic farmer, "a very simple man who didn't know anything about the war", who was sent off to serve as a soldier in the Italian army in Albania. After the Italian Armistice of September 1943, he was arrested by the Nazis and spent two years in a labour camp. "And when he came back, he was a skeleton. He weighed 35 kilos. He

was a crazy man, like a dead man. He was an obsessive."

Benigni wasn't himself born until 1952. Nevertheless, throughout his childhood, he and his sisters were told terrible stories about life in the camp. Their father was traumatised by his memories, but humour was his therapy. "There were some funny things too. And when he was able to smile, he stopped having nightmares."

Life is Beautiful begins cheerily enough, like a latter-day Mack Sennett two-

Happy Birthday Mozart, from Dittersdorf and Pergolesi

WITH MOZART'S music being played daily all over the world, a birthday concert sounds like a dull adventure. So why not give the opposition a chance? Or, more especially, those whose feeble light was dimmed by Mozart's genius?

Such logic partly inspired the Classical Opera Company's appearance at the Royal College of Music's Britten Theatre on the eve of the birthday in an event that featured music by Dittersdorf and

Pergolesi, as well as by Mozart himself. In the same venue last summer, the ensemble gave their operatic debut with his early *Apollo and Hyacinthus*. Since then, the theatre's become something of a home to this young, aspiring orchestra. Their authentic timbre of gut strings and reedy woodwind sounds well in its dry yet not unkind acoustic. So too, on Tuesday, did the voice of the actor Greg Wise, noted as Willoughby in the film of *Sense*

and *Sensitivity*, and here reading excerpts from the late Ted Hughes's *Stories from Ovid*.

The first half's theme also took a mythical turn, with a Dittersdorf symphony, *The Four Ages of Man*, preceding a Pergolesi cantata, *Orfeo*, before it came to a quietly resounding end with the soprano Mary Plazas' account of the Mozart concert aria, "Ah, lo previdi". Granted, the band could just as well have unearthed some Mozart-

CLASSICAL CLASSICAL OPERA COMPANY ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC LONDON

ian rarities. But the contrast of these other works both refreshed the ear and pointed a moral: banality touches every age, and our standard

view of the golden days of classical music may be as simplistic as the Ovidian ages of gold, silver, bronze and iron that Dittersdorf depicted. Iron proved of special interest: braying trumpets recalled high-energy Beethoven, but without a theme in sight. Pre-classical minimalism?

The cantata *Orfeo*, by contrast, was accomplished and cute. Plazas charted in firm melodic lines the tale of the songster from Thrace. Now almost forgotten save for his

"Miserere", Pergolesi, who died even younger than Mozart, yet much more famous, was suavely talented; but his ideas scarcely compared with those of "Ah, lo previdi," where, in the closing aria, a consoling oboe lulled the voice to an acceptance of grief above a plucked accompaniment that bore the imperishable Mozart hallmark.

Likewise the Jupiter Symphony, the single item in the second half. The conductor Ian Page's thought-

ful tempi made for a brisk yet never breathless first movement, and an adagio relaxing at a speed that also gave point to the main theme's significant silences. Throughout, a semi-chorus of burbling oboes and bassoons was a strata of in-built comedy. That miraculous finale moved in every sense, propelled by the skill of these players and the kind of invention that placed the birthday hero way ahead of any rivals.

NICHOLAS WILLIAMS

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INTV

Root and branch upheaval

THEATRE

THE FOREST
LYTTLETON THEATRE
RNT, LONDON

WITH THAT long, equine face of hers, Frances de la Tour is wonderfully adept at suggesting how a fastidious horse might react in the vicinity of a particularly noisome drain. It's a talent that comes in mighty handy if a touch too leisurely - production of Alexander Ostrovsky's 1870 comedy *The Forest*. The piece is revived now in a robust and sparkly adaptation by the Russian dramatist's 20th-century Anglo-Saxon counterpart, Alan Ayckbourn.

Trotting around her cashbox as though it were an extra limb, De la Tour plays Raisa, a tight-fisted fiftysomething widow and wealthy landowner. The action takes place just nine years after the emancipation of the serfs and Raisa's strategy for coping with this social cataclysm is to be even more tyrannical. De la Tour deliciously signals the skinflint selfishness under the widow's pose of misty-eyed philanthropy and the queasy distaste beneath her beamingly

gracious social permissiveness. All arch smouldering and ludicrous girlish flutter, Raisa has fallen in love with a young man half her age (David Bark-Jones), whose favour she sets out to buy.

This involves selling off strips of her forest to Vosmibratov (brawny, boorish Peter Gowen), a sert turned rich wood merchant and the kind of man she would not have allowed into the house a decade earlier. It also entails effectively disinheriting her two dependants: Niamh Linehan's soppily miserable Aksyusha, a live-in niece whom she treats as a tiresome charity case, and Gennadiy, a long-lost nephew. The arrival of the latter - itinerant ham tragedian with a diminutive comic sidekick in tow - turns the place and its values upside-down, causing the disruption you'd get if you let Don Quixote and Sancho Panza loose in a play by Chekhov.

The Forest gave rise to a landmark Expressionist staging by Meyerhold in 1924. Page's production limits itself to one symbolic touch: betokening the terminal decline of the country gentry the wood-work in the outdoor scenes



Frances de la Tour and David Bark-Jones in 'The Forest'

delight as the little put-upon ragamuffin actor, hilariously extricated when his partner's repeated grandiloquent gestures of generosity do them out of the wads of money he so desperately craves. But Michael Feast's Gennadiy lets you see that there's genuine kindness under the tragedian's high-flown romantic attitude. This is a rare play where thespians stand for sincerity and "real" people, epitomised by de la Tour's Raisa, for shabby falsity.

There's a lovely sequence where Gennadiy hurl denunciations from *King Lear* at Vosmibratov, who has just pompously savoured swindling Raisa out of several thousand roubles. It's typical of the play's wit that these Lear-like posturing don't exactly shame the ex-serf but sting him into a sort of theatrical competitiveness. He proceeds to do "the honourable thing" in an equally histrionic way.

An attractive drama, and much more than just a dry run for Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*.

PAUL TAYLOR

A version of this review appeared in the later editions of yesterday's paper

actor

By Geoffrey Mac

OVERVIEW	Critical View	Our View	On View
THE FILM SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE 	"It almost defies you not to have fun," remarked Anthony Quinn. "The film's satirical playfulness will certainly give audiences a lift, though what will raise the roof is the more obvious daze of its two leads." "Sparkling with wit and wonderful performances," exclaimed the <i>Daily Mail</i> , while the <i>Evening Standard</i> confessed: "I was entirely seduced... literate, sensual, accessible, light-hearted, even giddy-headed. A part-work that's all of a piece." "Vintage Stoppard," cried <i>The Times</i> , while <i>The Express</i> deemed it "the very definition of irreverence". "Movie-biz satire thinly disguised in Elizabethan fustian," demurred <i>The Guardian</i> .	<i>Shakespeare in Love</i> bears all the hallmarks of a winning costume drama and wears its frivolity on its sleeve. Backed by Stoppard's witty, intelligent script, this satire cannot fail to entertain.	<i>Shakespeare in Love</i> is out on nationwide release, certificate 15. 123 minutes.
THE DANCE: PINA BAUSCH 	"Bausch's genius is for assembling the varied material, manipulating its contrasts of speed, mood or genre, and shaping it so that gradually you see the pattern beneath," revealed John Percival. "A wild grab-bag of incidents, ranging from the predictable and dull to the haunting and fiercely comic," opined the <i>Financial Times</i> , while <i>The Times</i> cautioned: "Get sucked into Bausch's universe and you will be hooked for hours: lost in it and you will suffer interminable boredom." "A gorgeous nearly-dance to the cruel march and music of time," enthused the <i>Daily Mail</i> . "More walk-theatre than dance theatre, with some choice specimens on offer," wrote the <i>Daily Telegraph</i> .	By turns solemn and comic, Pina Bausch's singular arrangements will at once disturb and delight, though devotees of traditional choreography might find "dance" thin on the ground.	Tonight's is the final performance of <i>Pina Bausch's Viktor</i> at Sadler's Wells Theatre. For enquires call 0171-314 8800.
THE EXHIBITION: PORTRAITS BY INGRES 	"There's a consciousness that a clothed body is a naked body touched all over. These are portraits in which at every point, intimacy occurs," noted Tom Lubbock, concluding: "absolutely enthralling." <i>The Spectator</i> declared it "a splendid and unmissable exhibition", while <i>The Times</i> found "a curious blend of antiquity and modernity". "Portraits don't get more pri-	mal than <i>Monsieur Bertin</i> ," insisted the New Statesman, while the <i>Evening Standard</i> hyperbolised, "Ingres' eye served him well in the astonishing blend of bravura, flattery and the solid-pudding worth that was his portraiture." "A truly superb compilation by one of the world's greatest portraitists," gushed the <i>Sunday Telegraph</i> .	<i>Portraits by Ingres - Images of an Epoch</i> is at the National Gallery, London WC2, until 25 April. For bookings and enquiries call 0171-747 2885.
THE PLAY: VASSA 	"A savagely funny, if rather under-powered, production in which Hancock bags another monstrous matriarch," noted Paul Taylor. "Some amazing performances alongside the still, stony gravitas of Miss Hancock with her cackling last laugh," gushed the <i>Daily Mail</i> . <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> was delighted: "The Almeida has once again hit winning form," but the <i>Financial Times</i> had reservations, deeming it "impressive, interesting, entertaining. But it does not engage." "Although this fine production finds plenty of dark, ironical laughter in the play, it is a harsh piece," wrote <i>The Times</i> . "A little too grotesque and self-consciously theatrical," grumbled the <i>Evening Standard</i> .	Davies' production of Gorky's play brims with unsettling black comedy about the dangers of work becoming an end in itself, and boasts strong performances from the entire cast.	Vassava is at the Albery Theatre, London WC2 until 27 March. For bookings and enquiries, call 0171-369 1740.
THE BOOK: A LIFE OF RUDYARD KIPLING 	"Ricketts' straightforward biography provides a clear line through Kipling's morass of mental suffering... he is one of the great underrated figures in literature, and Ricketts' work will play its part in keeping him in the foreground," decided Frank McEwan. "Ricketts narrates readily enough... However, he short-changes the reader when it comes	to analysis and criticism of the writings; most of the books get a few skimpy paragraphs," carped the <i>Sunday Times</i> . "Never has a writer been so admired, and then so reviled, by his peers. This biography makes it possible to trace what went wrong," announced <i>The Daily Mail</i> . "Serviceable," stated <i>Time Out</i> .	Ricketts' straightforward biography provides a comprehensive and valuable account of Kipling's childhood traumas and quick rise to fame, but is short on literary analysis.
			<i>The Unforgiving Minute: A Life Of Rudyard Kipling</i> by Harry Ricketts (Chatto & Windus) is currently available in bookshops

EXIT POLL

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES THE KING'S HEAD LONDON

TANYA CHARAF
30, unemployed, London
"She evaluates women very well. I think it's highly accurate. It was hilarious; it cracked me up. You could tell the audience really liked her; she is so natural and talks directly and openly. She confronts the reality of the experiences women have."

NIGEL McBRIDE
38, psychologist, London
"I enjoyed it very much. I liked the way it managed to be serious as well as funny. And I was very moved, especially by the monologue about a woman from a Bosnian rape camp. It was extraordinary in its diversity of subjects. In some sense she managed a very complex subject very cleverly, and I think that has a lot to do with the tone."

PAM PERRY
20, student, London
"It was great. I really enjoyed the way she told her stories through characters. It felt like a real life especially as so many of the monologues were quite extraordinary. It is interesting to see how gender is treated in the theatre, and why this has been so successful."

MICHAEL EARLEY, 40, publisher, London
"It was nice it was graphic without being gross. In a proper context, the subject is enjoyable and refreshing. The women in the audience certainly seemed to love it. She is not a feminist by any means. She sets things up without making you feel uncomfortable, and she combines a good mix of storytelling rhythm and stand-up riffs."

What the camera didn't hear

THE ROOM is filled with the sound of a wave as it crashes on a seashore and then, seemingly, rolls itself back and crashes again, and again, and again. There's laughter and a low rumble of applause which quickly gathers momentum. A group of German boy scouts are pictured in a campsite, tucking into the contents of their hillyards, one turning to stare quizzically out at the viewer. William Furlong's latest audio-video work to show in London is, at the very least, spatially disorientating.

The images, taken in the late Twenties and early Thirties, are of a group of Wandervogel, a German youth movement, and were printed up from a box of glass plate negatives which Furlong came across in a

German market. Each photograph has been given an incongruous sound caption, such as "The Sounds of Footsteps in the City" or "The Sounds of the City at Night", all of which have been recorded and thrown together in an accompanying soundtrack which bounces around the gallery walls.

Eight speakers gang together to emit a cacophony. Bells peal out from one speaker to be echoed from another: a train passes, restaurant chatter bubbles away in the corner; birds chirrup; a siren wails; someone coughs; silence descends; or is that the sound of an empty room? A bee begins to buzz, first from one speaker and then several, and suddenly the air is filled with invisible bees. The

VISUAL ARTS

WILLIAM FURLONG
IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM, LONDON

cocktail of disparate sounds conjures up a clash of associated images and leaves the head spinning.

In "An Imagery of Absence", Furlong has chosen familiar sounds to both the Twenties and Thirties and now, as a means of linking the past with the present. "The sounds I recorded are those that surround us all the time in the way that ambient sounds do. They are the sort of sounds that would have been around then and pull the images into the present. It is all about what happened

next with these images and people." The photographs are clearly the work of an amateur photographer, at times out of focus or sporting a wayward finger over part of the lens, but the eod results are atmospheric and an evocative historical record of the German youth movement in the inter-war years. The activities of the great outdoors are presented in a romantic light: this is an idyllic pastoral existence where everybody is at one with the land - a visual aesthetic which artists were later encouraged to reproduce under the Third Reich.

Youth groups were numerous and popular in Germany between the wars, but all of them were eventually channelled into the Hitler Youth movement in 1939, when membership of that group was made compulsory. And while the peacetime pictures shown here capture an innocent enjoyment of outdoor life, it is impossible for them not to call to mind future events.

And so leaving the gallery, head still reeling from the barrage of discordant sounds and images, the Second World War British Spitfire and German Focke-Wulf suspended from the roof of the Imperial War Museum, appear more than a little apt.

KATE MIKHAIL

William Furlong's "An Imagery of Absence", the Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 (0171-416 5000), until 26 February. Entrance to the museum, £5 (adults)

ARTS DIARY

DAVID LISTER

SIR CAMERON Mackintosh has been obsessed with getting the musical *Martin Guerre* right for rather a long time. Now that the show has finally pleased the critics in its West Yorkshire Playhouse incarnation, the impresario can look to producing a new musical. Sir Cameron, at Wednesday's party for the transfer of *Oklahoma!* to the Lyceum, said he had finally found his next show. It will be a musical of John Updike's novel *The Witches of Eastwick*, with lyrics by John Dempsey and Diana P Rowe, who were responsible for *The Fiz* at the Donmar Warehouse. And it could open in London by the end of this year. Neither director nor cast has yet been chosen.

Perhaps Sir Cameron

should go for Sir Cliff Richard (right). He looked in need of cheering up at that same *Oklahoma!*

party when a journalist asked him whether he had seen the musical when it first opened. Sir Cliff spluttered into his mineral water as he pointed out that *Oklahoma!* opened in 1943, when he was three years old.

WRITING ABOUT the Barbican Centre's rejected lottery application earlier this

week, I asked the Arts Council why it had been turned down. I was told: "It is our policy never to reveal our reasons for rejecting an application." Why not, for goodness' sake? Why should members of the public not be told why their local arts venue or a national arts venue is refused lottery money? For years ministers have been telling the Arts Council to be more accountable, with little effect. The Culture Secretary Chris Smith belongs to a party committed to open government. He could prove it by making this publicly funded quango take the public into its confidence.

MARCO GOLDSCHMIDT, the managing director of the Richard Rogers partnership, is one of the front-runners for the presidency of the Royal Institute of British Architects. In his manifesto he says he wants the country's planning laws changed so that architects are always consulted by local planning committees. It is a manifesto commitment he can make with some confidence. By lucky coincidence, Lord Rogers has been bending the ear of the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott on exactly this matter, accompanying him on a trip to Holland recently to show him how the system works there.

From high heels to highbrow

HOW CAN you tell art from pornography? How indeed when you are at New York's Show World, the Times Square porn emporium, and you are watching *Breadman*, a short film about a man with a basket of actual bread. The film is part of Firewater Festival, a non-X-rated brief films selection that plays at Show World four nights a week.

Last year, the city tried to zone sex establishments out of the centre of Manhattan but, due to a loophole, shows like Show World as well as adult video emporia have stayed in business. As long as they maintain the required 60 per cent non-adult entertainment, the sleaze factories stay legal in Manhattan.

It's easy to suspect the city's own prudishness as stemming from the real-estate interests of Disney and

others, rather than a surge of moralism. And it's just as easy to suspect Show World's new taste for the art of virgin film directors as a painless way to cheat on the new laws.

In order to get to the fest, one must walk up the stairs marked Big Top, past signs declaring No Live Girls. I wind up alone in a room like a lacquered jewellery box - mirrored, black and red walls - and flickering lights. The video monitor plays *Angelmaker*, an earnest quickie featuring a girl in pioneer costume running through a foggy glade. Another young woman walks into the theatre. We eye each other suspiciously. "Are you from Show World?" she asks.

"No. Are you?" I reply.

It turns out she's scouting about for a company. She says she's

NEW YORK DIARY

ALISSA QUART

also starting a "Big Apple" dating service. This singular scene is of a piece with the story of how Firewater came to be. Dana Burnell, the 31-year-old screenwriter/festival co-

founder, ventured into the strip joints after the Supreme Court ruled up Mayor Giuliani's new anti-porn zoning laws. "I had worked on short films before, but they never got shown," says Burnell. "I saw an opportunity with this summer's ruling against the theatres." Of course, the festival's setting is its hook - its seedy atmosphere gives it a hipster credibility. Burnell says that one of the favoured activities before or after watching the Firewater films is to go into the strippers' changing rooms and have a chortle at the legends on the wall. The favourite one reads, "Every dancer must wear high heels or boots".

Not everyone gets the joke.

"Very highbrow" TV channel that

will go nameless interviewed us,

asked us over and over again

whether people masturbate while watching the shorts," winces Burnell.

Ivan Lerner, executive editor of *Screw*, a magazine which reads as its name suggests, says he feels a pang when he passes Times Square's sex accessories shops that were once filled with "whips and chains and dildos" and are now full of "ugly luggage and toasters". But Lerner sees the upside of the curtailed new arrangements of Manhattan's sex businesses. "I think the short films and the Kung Fu films they show now at Peepland are quite wonderful," he says. "And I think it's good that Show World is playing the movies because New York's venues for revival films have all closed down. Porno and art have both been ghettoised by the Mick Mouse mobolith."

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OMEGA

IF YOU happened to be a Carthusian monk in 18th-century France, you were probably best advised to steer clear of the Abbé Jean Nollet. Otherwise you were likely to get involved in one of his experiments. Unfortunately for the monastic brethren, their Abbé had a scientific bent, and a particular interest in electricity. In 1746, he lined up 200 monks, joined them together with wire, and connected them to a crude battery. This human chain extended for almost a mile, yet the current coursed easily from one end to the other. As the meo jerked and convulsed, Nollet concluded that electric signals could be transmitted over long distances.

So began this week's serial on Radio 4. The Victorian Internet by Tom

Standage tells the story of the electric telegraph, and its eventual worldwide development by Samuel Morse and other pioneers. David Rintoul provided a nice tone of relaxed factuality for the reading so that the required technical explanations were not overwrought or tedious.

Science seems always to have been one step ahead of the people who live with it, and 100 years ago the laws of physics must have seemed quite baffling. When the telegraph system was first laid out in America, few people understood how it worked. One farmer even decided that it must be a failure because he never heard any dispatches going up the line.

Years later, after the invention of wireless radio, Mark Lamarr sat in a

THE WEEK IN RADIO

MAGNUS MILLS

studio with a big pile of records. Rock'n'roll is something else that resulted from coises being sent along wires, and if the genre is to survive its enforced leap from Radio 1 to Radio 2, then it needs someone like Lamarr to make sure it arrives safely.

He opened his new series *Shake, Rattle and Roll* (Radio 2, Monday) hy

announcing the one great truth: "Elvis is still dead." Lamarr takes over the ground so well-prepared during the past four weeks by Frank Skinner's *In the Days before Rock'n'Roll*. This week he delved deep and came up with several songs about Cadillac, including a 1947 version of the Jackie Brenston classic, "Rocket 88".

If you didn't get a Cadillac, you could always try a motor-scooter instead. This was the form of transport encountered by Henry VIII in Corridors of Light and Shadow (Radio 3, Sunday). Actually, he was looking for a horse, or maybe a mother for his unborn son. He didn't seem to have made his mind up yet. Instead, he wandered around an Italian Renaissance city disguised as a musician and plagued by this bloke on a Vespa.

All very mysterious. If the young king really did once make a furtive visit to Mantua, as this programme suggested, then he was surely tempted by the late Duke's widow, Isabella d'Este. Set against a background of very modern noises, the royal pair went sightseeing together, and she seemed to drop a few hints. She pointed out frescoes where English royal livery lay entwined with Gonzagan marigolds. "Apollo wears a short skirt and teats forward," she observed.

"He wears nothing underneath." This undoubtedly made Henry go all hot and sweaty, and when she led him into her secret garden he probably thought his luck was in. Trouble was, he was already married and she was having none of it.

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THE BOOKS INTERVIEW

Journeys across the border

Julia Blackburn takes literature to a land where fact and fancy mix. Sara Wheeler tracks her down

Is it a novel? Is it a travel book? Is it a biography? You're never quite sure with a book by Julia Blackburn. This seems, to the author, to be a perfectly natural state of affairs. "My whole life blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction," she says. "Categories are irrelevant."

Blackburn's career took off in 1994 when she published *Daisy Bates in the Desert*, a rich stew of travel writing, memoir and biography swirling round the eponymous Daisy, a feisty Irish fantasist who knocked about in the Australian bush in the first half of the century. Daisy reaped a bountiful harvest of reviews, a quantity of foreign rights sales and a loyal following.

For the book before that, *The Emperor's Lost Island*, Blackburn travelled to St Helena in search of Napoleon. Her interest was piqued, she claims, when she saw the great man's pickled testicles displayed in a museum in southern France. In the book, Napoleon's story unfurls like a sail as Blackburn's ship steams towards his island.

Given her refusal to be pinned down by fact or fiction, it's not surprising that she has set her new book in the medieval period. She was attracted to the way it fails to separate the real world from that of the imagination. Saints walk on and off the pages of *The Leper's Companions* (Jonathan Cape, £14.99) without anyone turning a hair and miracles happen alongside acts of horrid brutality.

The book - Blackburn's second novel - follows a small band of medieval pilgrims from Norfolk village to Jerusalem. The group are joined by a shadowy narrator who has dropped in from the modern era. Blackburn is much taken with this notion of the elasticity of time. "Everything kept reminding him of something else," she writes, "the elements deceptive and the past breaking through into the present while the present sank back into the past."

Writing is in the family: her father was a poet. Thomas Blackburn separated from Julia's painter mother when their only child was 12. As he drank a lot and took amphetamines, it was a wild kind of childhood. But Julia was clearly fond of her dad, who died in 1977. She recently edited a selection of his poems, *For a Child*, which the Warwick-based Greville Press is bringing out this month.

The title poem, written for Julia, begins "And have I put upon your shoulders then. What in myself I have refused to bear". And so it turned out to be. Thomas's daughter has been writing for as long as she can remember: cobbling a living together from freelance editing, ghostwriting and copywriting, initially in London and subsequently, after her children were born, in Suffolk. She says she didn't have the confidence to write fiction for many years, and that it never occurred to her that she would be able to earn a living from proper writing. But she does now. She turned 50 last year and is published in ten languages.

Her Dutch husband and their two children went with her both to St Helena and Australia. The family home is a cosy old house in north Suffolk, a few miles from the sea and a few more from the Norfolk border. There is a large, rambling garden, and a boisterous rascal called Mink Blackburn blends in with the happy detritus of rural family life - hairy dog baskets, discarded wellies and seashells queuing on the wind-swept - and when we go out for a walk she wears an old blue woolly hat. There is a



JULIA BLACKBURN, A BIOGRAPHY

Julia Blackburn was born in London in 1948. She took a degree in English from York University and worked as a freelance writer and editor before devoting herself full time to her books. She has two children, is

divorced and lives in Suffolk. Her six books include *Charles Waterton* (1989), *The Emperor's Lost Island* (1991), *Daisy Bates in the Desert* (1994), and two novels: *The Book of Colour* (1995), which was shortlisted

for the Orange Prize, and *The Leper's Companions*. She has just edited a volume of her father Thomas Blackburn's poetry, entitled *For a Child* and published this month by The Greville Press.

touch of the Luddite about her. She still writes her books on a manual typewriter.

Critics have compared Blackburn's work with that of Bruce Chatwin, who died ten years ago. It's difficult not to see parallels, both writers clothing skeletons of fact in the ample flesh of their imaginations. In style,

too, the pair are remarkably similar: Both favour sketchily drawn characters, short books, short chapters and short paragraphs, and both display an aversion to the subordinate clause.

Unlike Chatwin, however, who famously began his travel book *In Patagonia* with

the fiction "in my grandmother's dining room there was a glass-fronted cabinet and in the cabinet a piece of skin," Blackburn never makes anything up in her travel writing. She bristles at the suggestion. "There is nothing invented. It would never occur to me to make anything up!"

But she does admire Chatwin. "I've got terribly excited reading his books. I have a sense of coming home. I get bogged down with some bits, like the Grand Guignol of *The Vice-roy of Ouidah*, but I like the freshness with which he approached each subject. He might be slightly dodgy in some of his fictions and fictions, but his integrity in actually writing is without question. It's an honour to be compared to him."

She has none of Chatwin's studied self-awareness, though, and it's simply not possible to imagine myth-makers getting to work on her. For a writer so powerfully drawn to fantasy, Julia Blackburn is reassuringly down to earth. A woman who has to do the school run, buy the dog food and wash the smalls can't be running off to Paris every five minutes to stock up on moleskin notebooks. "I see books very much as companions in the times I am writing them," she says, "so to me they represent stages of my life. They are all part of my autobiography, and I can read myself and things that I was going through in the books."

In the case of *The Leper's Companions*, she was going through a great deal. Her marriage had come apart. "The story became very literally a way of getting out of the present by going into the past and thinking about things I couldn't think about directly because they were too close to the surface - and too dangerous, I suppose. By seeing things through the metaphor of a medieval time, I could go through all sorts of adjusting processes."

Then, having completed a first draft, she became very ill. "When I was in hospital going under with the anaesthetic I suddenly thought, I know what's going to happen to the leper! I'd been holding on very tight in my own life, and when I was ill I had to let go. I saw, in hospital, what my connections were with the people I'd been writing about. That was when the book took its present form and I decided that the narrator should go along with the other characters on the pilgrimage."

She says she never knows where a book is going when she starts it. With *The Leper's Companions*, as the whole pattern of her life changed, so did the book. It was originally planned as short stories, then the biography of a medieval pilgrim - and it has turned out to be a typically Blackbournian hybrid. "It's quite funny," she says ruefully, "that one works flat out for three and half years and at the end of it you have just 216 pages."

Part of her now, is living at the cusp of the 18th and 19th centuries. She's writing about Goya. During a visit to Madrid at a time when she was "unskinned", she saw his black paintings, learnt that he became stone deaf - and found her next book. Julia Blackburn's writing takes over when she leaves her notes behind and lets her imagination take over. "You get to the end of the research and say, right, now we're ready to begin. It's making the material your own that counts."

Making it your own: this is the key to Julia Blackburn's success. She does it instinctively; other writers have to discover it. Patrick Leigh Fermor once had the ultimate travel writer's disaster: he lost the notebook recording his journey. Yet the book which emerged, he said later, was one of his best.

She smiles when I relate this anecdote. "The pleasure of writing," she remarks sagely, "is knowing the material well enough to be able to go without maps."

COVER STORIES



WITH SIMPSONS - allegedly the inspiration for *Are You Being Served?* - having closed its doors, there's increasing speculation on the future of Piccadilly book-selling. One rumour has the venerable Hatchards quitting its site down the road to set up shop in the Simpsons building, while the other has the Waterstone's name over the door with Hatchards moving to become a "Hatchards at Waterstone's". HMV Media Group, which owns both, is keeping mum. Intriguingly, the prestigious Hatchards site is owned by the Maudsley and Bethlehem Hospitals. Could there be an apter metaphor for the madness of British book-selling?

BERYL BAINBRIDGE has yet another chance of making it to the altar. *Master Georgie*, which many critics agreed should have won the Booker, is shortlisted for the £10,000 W H Smith Literary Award. This time she's up against Alan Bennett, Hilary Spurling, Anthony Beevor, William Boyd and Julian Barnes in another mixed-bag contest. Robert Harris, one of TV's talking heads for Booker night and a Bainbridge supporter, is chairman of the judges.

REMEMBER J R HARTLEY's long search for his book on fly fishing? Now authors, and indeed the rest of us, can dispense with the Yellow Pages and search on the net. The first online second-hand bookshop has just opened at: www.booklovers.co.uk. Booklovers offers good quality second-hand books in a wide variety of categories. Each title is described and quality graded, making it possible to "browse" as one would in a real bookshop. Searches can be conducted by author, title or keyword.

FRANK HERBERT's 1965 novel *Dune* has become a SF classic, selling some 10m worldwide. Now his son Brian Herbert, along with Kevin J Anderson of *X-Files* fame, is finishing a three-volume "prelude" which will tell us what happened before *Dune* opens. The first will come from Hodder this autumn. The trilogy is based on notes left by Herbert, who died in 1976, and on conversations between father and son.

SUBTLE IS not among the words often applied to PR stunts. On 4 February, customers at Virgin Megastores who buy a copy of Josie Lloyd and Emlyn Rees's collaborative novel *Come Together* will get a free condom. Meanwhile, its publishers Arrow have just sent journalists a packet of three. Thanks, guys, but it's the unprotected type we worry about.

THE LITERATOR

The end of Lonely Street

Sky-high on prescribed drugs, he wore a Bureau of Narcotics badge with pride... Charles Shaar Murray asks where it all went wrong for the King

THE BEST one-sentence summary of the bizarre trajectory of Elvis Presley's life and career is still Little Richard's. Elvis, opined the Bronx Liberace, "got what he wanted, but he lost what he had". In *Last Train To Memphis*, the justly-lauded first volume of this monumental biography, Peter Guralnick told the story of how Elvis got what he wanted. In *Careless Love*, we watch Presley losing what he had. As his sly, manipulative manager Colocel Tom Parker once remarked, "When I met Elvis he had a million dollars worth of talent. Now he has a million dollars."

Careless Love picks up in 1958, with the 23-year-old Elvis's induction into the US Army and the death of his beloved mother, Gladys. These were pivotal events: the man was never the same after the bereavement and the artist was never the same after military service. He went in a threat to Western civilisation and came out a middle-American icon, clean-cut family entertainer specialising in "Bing Crosby pictures".

An exhilarating late-Sixties return to form turned out to be little more than a mirage and he spent the Seventies degenerating into the bloated, incontinent "Fat Elvis" who died in his bathroom, face down in



Careless Love: the unmaking of Elvis Presley

by Peter Guralnick

Little, Brown, £19.99, 756pp

a pool of vomit with his gold pyjama bottoms around his swollen ankles. He had 14 different drugs in his system.

Elvis's position on the subject of drugs bears an eerie similarity to Bill Clinton's on sex. Elvis believed that having something legally prescribed by a tame doctor classified it as "medicine", as opposed to "drugs", which were for hippies and subversives. The logical conclusion was the grotesque spectacle of Elvis, weighed down with guns and higher than a Branson balloon on the kind of expensive heavy-duty chemicals about which street dopers could only fantasise, boozing his way into

Nixon's Oval Office to offer his services as an anti-drug campaigner and flag himself a Bureau of Narcotics badge.

How did it all go so hideously wrong? As his buddy Lamar Fife remarked, "Elvis always kept his own world with him; he kept his bubble." One of his last girlfriends concurs: "Like the boy in the bubble - he was just this guy who had this wonderful charisma and things got blown way out of shape. He was just this innocent little guy."

If anything destroyed Elvis, it was precisely that. He was the first person from his background - redneck, blue-collar, white skin - to experience anything remotely like what happened to him. To maintain his equilibrium he surrounded himself with the posse of obsequious hometown huddies who became known as the Memphis Mafia and who combined with Colonel Parker to isolate him from the outside world. Spiritually deep but intellectually shallow, he had everything money could buy - but that was all he had.

So which Elvis are we talking about? There was the Elvis who endorsed Adlai Stevenson against Eisenhower in the 1956 election; who was - by the standards of his environment - quite spectacularly unreputable; who was pals with James

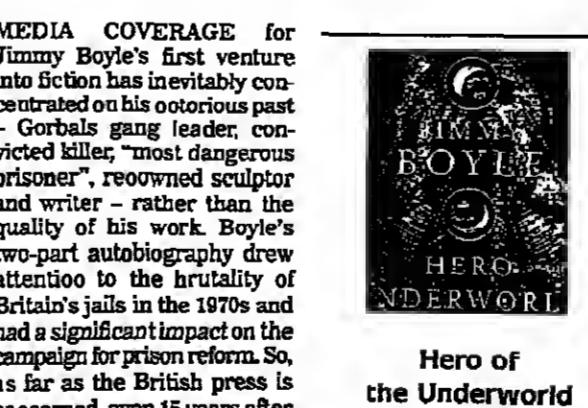
Brown; who tried acid in 1965; who became utterly distraught at the assassination of Dr Martin Luther King, and numbered *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Dr Strangelove* among his favourite movies. Then there was the Elvis who considered J Edgar Hoover the greatest living American; who loved to wear cop uniforms and collect badges; who wanted to invite Khrushchev home to prove that anyone could succeed under capitalism; and who was so hung up about motherhood that he banished his bride from his bed following the birth of their child because he could not bear to have sex with any woman who had given birth.

To put it mildly, this is not a pretty story. Most of the best previous writing about Elvis has been analytical and polemical - much of that, in turn, has been the work of Greil Marcus, notably *Mystery Train* and *Dead Elvis*. Here Guralnick plays it straight. In the preface to *Last Train To Memphis*, he stated that "if I have succeeded in my aim, I have given the reader the tools to create his or her own portrait of Elvis Presley." He has indeed succeeded - brilliantly and beautifully.

What we are left with, ultimately, is a mesmerising account of America's broken promise writ large - who was pals with James

Sentences with an appeal

Forget the author's sensational past as gangster and convict, argues Danuta Kean, and you will still enjoy a bleakly funny fictional debut



Hero of the Underworld

by Jimmy Boyle

Serpent's Tail, £8.99, 216pp

to believe his own stretch in solitary was not in mind when the vivid passages about Hero's incarceration were written.

The strengths of the book are its compassion and gallows humour. In *Hero*, Boyle has created a character whose struggle captures the sympathy of the reader and whose narration has a linguistic authenticity - including an at times irritating tendency to slip into cliché. There is genuine pathos in the contrast between Hero's macho defiance during captivity and his utter impotence when released: he cannot control his bowels, let alone his penis. Freedom disempowers him and he longs for the status and security of confinement.

Much of the humour is provided by macabre comic scenes, though Boyle's reliance on bodily functions, cadavers and graveyards leaves him open to the criticism that he has opted for easy laughs. Hero's friends provide the other element of farce. The midget Bonecrusher, who eats pig's eyeballs as though they were sherbet lemons, Sligo, whose cod Irishness is straight from the set of *Ballykissangel*, and the tramps Skelly and Wart hog are types frequently found in this kind of Grand Guignol world. But the stereotypes are redeemed by clever character

twists and Boyle's sympathy. The novel's chief weakness lies in Boyle's method of writing. It reflects his approach to scripting, which he describes as "energy". He chooses to attack his medium "blind", chipping away until the character of the stone emerges. This gives his sculptures a visceral power, a dangerous edge.

His approach to writing follows much the same style. The characters emerge from his unconscious, after which he chips away at his word processor until the story arrives. It is an unusual method in an age when plotting has reassured its primacy and many new novels resemble joined-up screenplays. When it works, it works well, but at times it leads to some sloppy writing in need of the editor's pencil.

Beyond these minor flaws, *Hero...* provides a vivid fabulist, replete with redemptive morality and a few belly laughs. As well as a notorious past, Jimmy Boyle can boast an undoubted ability as a storyteller of imagination and power.



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Prophets of a lost paradise

350 years ago today, the English beheaded their anointed king. Tom Paulin uncovers and celebrates the forgotten Republicans

Today's date is given in the Oxford University Diary as the feast of "Charles I, King and Martyr". Until last month, the distinguished scholar and critic David Norbrook was an English tutor at the university but, perhaps exasperated by all those smug dinners with toasts to the Queen, he resigned and emigrated to the republic of the United States. His marvellously original, densely researched study of the English republican imagination (and intellect, one should stress) is an attempt to retrieve forgotten figures like the regicide Henry Marten, as well as to extend our understanding of the work of Milton and Marvell.

As Britain moves towards either a republic or a reduced monarchy, *Writing the English Republic* should help us to understand both the tragedy and the glory of this partly-buried period of English literary history. What Milton called "the ostentatious parade of royalty" may even become a thing of the past. No longer a literary theme park, Britain will be a vigorous new republic which no longer needs (Milton again) "that flatulent cry of the royal blood". But in order to do this a long period of historical amnesia will need to be addressed, and the shades of many ancestors brought back towards what Milton terms the "great palace now of light".

This burying of the past was in its time a civilised process which aimed to heal the wounds left by the two civil wars the English fought in the 1640s. However, as Norbrook points out, Charles's minions – like the previously loyal Cromwellian Sir George Downing, for whom the street is named – hunted down several regicides who were brutally executed. They were half-hanged, their genitals cut off and their intestines burnt in front of them.

Beyond this barbarity, the Act of Indemnity and Oblivion banned "any name or names, or other words of reproach tending to revive the memory of the late differences". Norbrook's study attempts to counter the effects of this erasure. Suppressing the republican element in English culture means that most British citizens have an impoverished idea of their national past.



Writing the English republic:
poetry, rhetoric and politics
1627-1660
by David Norbrook
Cambridge University Press, £40, 523pp

To begin the process of educating us as citizens, scholars like Norbrook need to spend years in libraries like the Bodleian (that library bravely hid Milton's books after the Restoration, rather than obey an order to burn them). One of his major discoveries concerns the Roman poet Lucan, whose epic poem *Pharsalia*, about the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, is central to the English republican imagination.

Virgil and Horace remain strong presences in English poetry, but Lucan's austere republicanism has been lost. Christopher Marlowe's resonant portrait of the first book of the *Pharsalia* was published after his murder, and my bunch that Milton remembered part of it ("strings of fire Fly in the air and dreadful bearded stars") And comets that presage the fall of kingdoms" when he dictated these lines about Satan's obscured glory:

as when the sun new risen
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon
In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs

Charles II's Licenser of the Press regarded these lines as politically subversive. If he had spotted the parallels between Milton's Satan and Lucan's Caesar, he might also have seen that *Paradise Lost* celebrates the English republic right from the opening address to the Holy Spirit. Among Norbrook's discoveries is a pamphlet in which a republican theorist echoes the

opening of Genesis ("the earth was without form and void") to describe the historical situation out of which the English commonwealth was created. God's creation of the universe is analogous both to the emergence of republican England, and the divine inspiration which builds Paradise.

Norbrook is particularly interesting on the way in which political theory derived from Lucan and Machiavelli informs writing during this period. He shows how discord and turbulence were seen as central to the health of a state. Where Virgil and Horace liked to sing of concord, Lucan describes both the Roman state and the cosmos as an unstable, discordant mechanism. Where royalists believed in beauty, concord, unity, puritan republicans believed in subtlety, free speech and a turbulent iconoclasm.

This battle, both political and aesthetic, informs a sermon by William Laud which is another of Norbrook's compelling discoveries. Laud, who became Archbishop of Canterbury and died on the scaffold like his master Charles I, was at this time Bishop of London. On 17 March 1628, he gave a sermon at the opening of parliament which alludes to Caesar's overthrow of Pompey and the Emperor Frederick's triumph over Saladin. By analogy, Caesar and the last important medieval Holy Roman Emperor are Charles I, while Pompey and Saladin are those puritan members of parliament who 17 years later would convict Laud of treason and cut off his head. As Norbrook states, Laud's sermon publicly and provocatively aligned the Anglican church with the goal of crushing republicanism.

One of the triumphs of Norbrook's historical method of reading literary texts is the close attention he pays to particular words and lines of verse. Thus Marvell, at the start of the "Horatian Ode on Cromwell's Return from Ireland", uses the word "now" three times:

The forward youth that would appear
Must now forsake the muses dear
And now the Irish are exharned
The Pict no shelter now shall find

As Norbrook shows, this use of "now" is linked to Sir Peter Lely's portrait of Henry Marten, that forgotten regicide,



Charles I bids farewell to his children just before his execution

Hulton Getty

which has the word NOW inscribed on it.

The word is a Machiavellian injunction to decisive action, "to seize the occasion, perhaps linked with regicide". Although Marvell compares Charles I to Caesar in the "Horatian Ode", he famously uses the poem by warning that the same – i.e. military – arts that "did gain A power, must yet become Caesar himself".

Milton, it may be, shared a similar reservation. He both eulogises Cromwell in his hugely eloquent and heroic pamphlet "Second Defence of the People of England", and warns him not to "invade that liberty which you have defended". Arguing that Cromwell ought not to assume the title of king, Milton – in a passage Norbrook quotes – activates the style of anti-courtly sublime: "You deservedly reject that pomp of title which attracts the gaze and admiration of the multitude. For what is a title but a certain definite mode of dignity, but actions such as yours surpass, not only the bounds of our admiration, but our titles; and, like the points of pyramids, which are lost in the clouds, they soar above the possibilities of titular commendation."

In my view, this is a passage which also allows us to see deep into Milton's political subconscious by tracing that curious, almost Magritte-like comparison of Cromwell's epic actions to pyramids. Compare this passage with some lines from Book Five of *Paradise Lost*:

and Soden to his royal seat
High on a hill, far blazing, as a mount
Razed on a mount, with pyramids and towers
From diamond quarries hewn, and rocks of
Gold

cover of fog near Brentwood in Essex.

Meanwhile, these anti-royalist lines:

More solemn than the tedious pomp that
trails

On princes, when their rics retinue long
Of horses led, and grooms besmeared with gold

pick up statements by Lady Macbeth after King Duncan's murder. Milton is associating royal pomp and ceremony with a murderous would-be-king, though I wonder if at a deeper subconscious level there may be some knot of regicide guilt here.

If a non-specialist can pick up such allusions, how many more can a Milton scholar find? Now that he has hatched *Writing the English Republic* out of the abyss of royalist Oxford, I suggest that an ambitious publisher invite Norbrook to do a new edition of *Paradise Lost*. One thing, sadly, is certain. That publisher will not be Oxford University Press, for that disastrously managed and discredited outfit – a department of the university – has axed its poetry list. Did the academics who are styled "delegates to the press" resign? No; like Satan's minions, they clung to the cliff ledge of their bountiful free books. As we wait for that shining new edition of *Paradise Lost*, let us give thanks for those long years this exemplary Scottish scholar spent in the Bodleian Library, researching the deep structures of English liberty.

Tom Paulin is a fellow of Hertford College, Oxford

Duped by the mandolin's seductive sound

"THE MILLION-copy bestseller", yells the jacket on the latest reprint of Captain Corelli's *Mandolin* (Vintage, £5.99). A trifle previous, perhaps, since the latest figures showed the ubiquitous commuter's companion on sales of 995,000. At any rate, the Louis de Bernières blockbuster has helped to fuel some smug punditry about the upwardly-mobile drift of the book charts. More will follow in the wake of the late Laureate's Whitbread victory this week, as Ted Hughes has lately outsold the likes of Terry Pratchett and Maeve Binchy. Then again, *Birthday Letters* on its current form might well walk away with the Eurovision Song Contest, or even the Cheltenham Gold Cup!

It's true enough that a handful of classy titles now profit from the

kind of marketing barrage that once served only pulp and gitz. Liberally sprinkled with the likes of *Cold Mountain*, *Memories of a Geisha* or *The God of Small Things*, the fiction Top Tens of the late 1990s do appear to have undergone a rapid evolutionary spurt. A decade or so ago, the equivalent lists would freeze in the tacky grip of Jackie (Collins), Jilly (Cooper), Freddy (Forsythe), and their friends. These days, such aristocrats of the airport racks will often undersell their "literary" rivals by a mile.

So far, so flattering – to readers, retailers and publishers alike. Yet it takes a trunk of cash to make a star – especially at the top end of the market. Even Captain Corelli, that fabled word-of-mouth success, enjoyed more PR attention than its

A WEEK IN BOOKS



BOYD TONKIN
Are we really 'braining up' to better books?

legend would suggest. The pizzazz that can catapult a complex novelist to peaks of fame will cost enough to ensure that other good writers languish in a deeper obscurity than

ever. In publishing, the differentials that divide the pampered élite from the rest have widened oceanically. Matthew 25:23 springs to mind:

"Unto every one that hath shall be given...". So a host of gifted authors in the hard-pressed so-called "midlist" now find themselves cut so much published as simply printed. There's no such thing as a free publication lunch, and the perceived second division will always pick up the tab.

At least plenty of novelists still find a home of sorts. Many species of non-fiction authors face out just neglect but extinction. Eliminate the journeyman biographies, the modish memoirs, the moonlighting scientists, the Cooked-up kiss-and-tell, and the noo-sficio prospects for early 1999 look pitifully thin.

I have been savouring an exquisite set of essays and narratives by the American nature writer Barry Lopez. *About This Life* (Harvill, £12). This peerless stylist records reflective journeys across tundra or tropic that stand in relation to Bill Bryson's jolly trips roughly as Messiah does to Madonna. A balanced culture needs both, of course – but dozens of chequebook-wave for the Brysons while only a few brave souls (in this case, Christopher MacLennan at Harvill) dare bid for the Lopezes.

No-fiction writing of this grace and grandeur now looks as rare, and as threatened, as the wolves or bears Lopez so lyrically pursues.

However sweet that chart-topping mandolin sounds, we need – more

than ever – to hear different tunes.

ERRATA

by FELIX BENNETT



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• **Crying and lying on the road to truth**

South Africa's 'rainbow nation' found not a crock of gold but a can of worms. Christopher Hope looks inside

There existed in South Africa, from 1996 to 1998, a panel called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It became known as the TRC – because everything in South Africa is stripped down to bare initials. The Commission held public hearings across the country. Those who had suffered under the old regime were invited to tell their stories, and claim redress. And those responsible were encouraged to own up.

Anjie Krog followed the TRC as a radio reporter, and it gripped her body and soul. The TRC was a kind of stock-taking into the mountain of damaged goods the old regime left behind. The Commission was also one of the oddest bodies ever to lumber across the South African landscape. It was built of all the colours of what used to be called "the rainbow nation" – until people found the rainbow led not to a crock of gold but to a can of worms, and the expression fell into disuse.

It was led by a bishop, Desmond Tutu, and ran, it seems, on tears, rhetoric and adrenaline. When the Commissioners were not horrified by the evidence, they were horrified with each other. They regularly broke down and wept. Or called each other "racists". Or, worse still, "liberals" –

and, in the new South Africa, that's an even dirtier word than it was in the old South Africa.

Reading about the Commission in the Afrikaans press, I sometimes got the idea that it was seen as lynch party led by a black bishop in a frock. Skeptical Afrikanners called it the "Crying and Lying Commission".

The TRC looked at the years between 1960 until 1993 – the age of High Apartheid. The period was arbitrary, but one must start somewhere. Start at the beginning and you would have to go back three centuries to the first Dutch settlers in the Cape, who bought a gang of slaves, plenty of whips, and retired to the shade of a thorn tree. The British took it over. And, finally, the Afrikanners turned it into the state religion.

Anjie Krog is an Afrikanner and this adds a fine edge to her telling. Her book is less about the victims of one of the cruellest and most stupid forms of blood-religion ever devised than about the anguish of many Afrikanners. Shame is what they feel, she says shrewdly, but not guilt. She is right, as any cursory reading of the white nationalistic papers will show. Alas, very few people read the Afrikaans press.

But she is mistaken when she says

that the TRC made whites aware of what had been done in their name. Let us dispose of the canard that some people "didn't know". It was almost impossible not to know what was going on. You could not escape it if you wanted to. Apartheid was never a dirty little secret. It was for many people as natural as breathing.

The deal went something like this. Afrikanners ran the country; English-speakers went into business. Good South Africans were rewarded with rugby matches. Bad South Africans went to jail. Those who disagreed with the regime were exiled, jailed, banned, pushed from high windows, bombed,

shot and hanged. The people who ran the show were proud of it. And most whites not only knew how the show was run – they approved.

But the TRC at least provoked an assault on the collective loss of memory. Businessmen and judges, for example, now deny aiding and abetting the regime. Yet back in the old days it was as hard to find a captain of industry who did not support the regime as it is these days finding one who admits doing so. It is claimed that judges never supported the regime. But there was no need to; their judgments did it for them.

Appearing before the Commission were the foot-soldiers of apartheid: the torturers, interrogators, gunmen, informers, bombers and contract killers. But what of the big fish, those figures called in South African cliché-babble the "major players"? The white leaders who promoted the murder programmes, or the ANC commanders who sent bombers into shopping malls? They regretted past "mistakes", dodged and weaved, or refused to testify. And blamed the "other" side.

Black and white politicians did what they do best. It is the old South African impulse – when in doubt, form a cartel and dupe up the opposition.

Perhaps it does not matter. *Country of My Skull* is worth reading for the stories told by those who suffered most. Bereaved wives, fathers, lovers and children speak of their loss and their pain in voices so free of bated breath that one can only marvel. Their evidence makes this one of the most remarkable books to come out of South Africa for a long time.

Antjie Krog did not cover the final few months of the Commission's life. Disillusion spread. Truth, as Pontius Pilate knew, is a dodgy little number to pin down – and reconciliation fared not much better. Poll after poll showed black and white further apart after the Commission wound down than before it started.

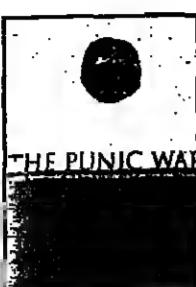
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission began in the eyes of some, as the government's creature. But faced with unpalatable truths about ANC atrocities, the government muttered darkly about shelving the final report. Tutu, as chairman, said he would go to jail first. It was just like old times. The TRC managed, in the end, to upset just about everyone – and that is a rather wonderful achievement.

Christopher Hope publishes his new novel, "Signs of the Heart", in June



PAPERBACKS

BY EMMA HAGESTADT AND CHRISTOPHER HIRST



The Punic Wars
by Nigel Bagnall, £12.50, 347pp

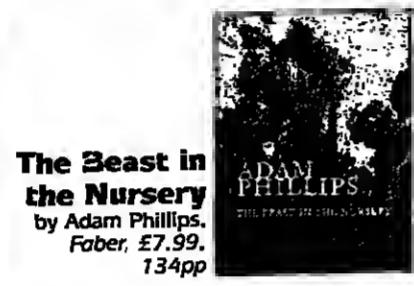


KAROO
by Steve Tesich, Vintage, £6.99, 406pp

A MODERN Field-Marshal applies his strategic expertise to the greatest confrontation of classical times. The 118-year conflict between Carthage and Rome was initiated by the expansionist Romans, who got more than they bargained for when Hannibal hacked his way almost to the walls of Rome. Bagnall's analysis is leavened with character sketches and dry humour. He notes that a ferocious general who advocated cannibalism to ease logistics problems was "obviously a very practical fellow, if a bit short on realism."



Arithmetic
by Todd McEwen, £5.99, 186pp

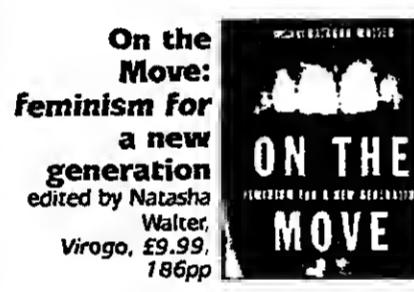


The Beast in the Nursery
by Adam Phillips, Faber, £7.99, 134pp

CHILDHOOD, SOUTHERN Californian-style is the subject of Todd McEwen's latest comic novel. Thrown out of their hacienda-style bungalow to make way for the building of Disneyland, Joe Lake's family is relocated to a new tract home in a new town. School is OK until Joe blows it by taking a huge jade-coloured pencil (topped off with a wooden China man) to his maths class. From then on, arithmetic comes to embody all the "crappy feelings" he has for his new home. An energetic and brightly lit child's-eye view of life in the dirt hills of Orange County.



The Gold of Exodus
by Howard Blum, Coronet, £7.99, 435pp



On the Move: feminism for a new generation
edited by Natasha Walter, Virago, £5.99, 186pp

THOUGH IT reads like an airport novel, this is a real-life account of an attempt by a dodgy American duo – an "ex-SWAT team member" and a "politician and treasure hunter" – to find gold hidden on the "true Mount Sinai". While diving in the Red Sea, they chance upon "the land bridge that the Israelites crossed 4000 years ago". Sadly, the mountain of Moses turns out to be a Saudi nuclear base and our heroes are arrested. "Don't even think of turning cute on me," warns their captor. Were they set up by Mossad? Who cares? Reading this book is like being cornered by bar-room fantasists.

IN HER book *The New Feminism*, The Independent's Natasha Walter challenged the assumption that feminism had become a dirty word among young women. This anthology of nine essays (including pieces by MP Oona King, journalists Kath Viner and Aminatta Forna, Helen Wilkinson of Demos, and several 15 to 18-year-olds) resoundingly proves her point. It's a passionately argued and undogmatic read, and Walter says she found herself disagreeing with many contributors' opinions. The only shame is that some of feminist's liveliest commentators were too long in the tooth to be included.

Sel improvement is the order of the day at the top of the non-fiction list. The top seven titles tackle the inner and outer man and woman, as well as their surroundings. And it has been argued this week that a fair proportion of the phenomenal 150,000 copies sold of Ted Hughes's multi-award-winning *Birthday Letters* has been purchased by aspirational readers, rather than by dyed-in-the-wool poetry lovers.

Patricia Cornwell's avid fans have ensured that *Southern Cross*, her latest thriller, goes straight in at

number two, denied the top slot by Patricia Scanlan's tale of the lives and loves of three young women. Compiled from sales over seven days ending 25 January 1999. © Bookwatch Ltd, 1999.

BESTSELLERS

ORIGINAL FICTION

TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	WEEKLY SALES	PRICE
1 (2) <i>City Girl</i>	Patricia Scanlan (Bantam)	2,839	£5.99
2 (-) <i>Southern Cross</i>	Patricia D Cornwell (Little, Brown)	2,171	£4.99
3 (1) <i>Tiffany's Secret Diary</i>	Kate Lock (BBC)	1,940	£5.99
4 (3) <i>Tom Clancy's Powerplays</i>	Tom Clancy (Penguin)	1,430	£9.99
5 (4) <i>Ramsey's Under the Western Acacia</i>	Christian Jacq (Simon & Schuster)	1,175	£16
6 (10) <i>Glamorama</i>	Bret Easton Ellis (Picador)	989	£5.99
7 (5) <i>Churchill's People</i>	Mary Jane Staples (Corgi)	933	£16.99
8 (8) <i>This United State</i>	Colin Forbes (Macmillan)	882	£16.99
9 (6) <i>Archangel</i>	Robert Harris (Hutchinson)	841	£5.99
10 (-) <i>Miracle Cure</i>	Michael Palmer (Hutchinson)	760	£5.99

ORIGINAL NON-FICTION

TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	WEEKLY SALES	PRICE
1 (3) <i>Men are from Mars...</i>	John Gray (Thorsons)	3,529	£8.99
2 (1) <i>Della's How to Cook</i>	Della Smith (BBC)	3,386	£16.99
3 (2) <i>Little Book of Feng Shui</i>	Lillian Too (Element)	2,784	£1.99
4 (4) <i>The Little Book of Calm</i>	Paul Wilson (Penguin)	2,116	£18.99
5 (7) <i>Seafood Odyssey</i>	Rick Stein (BBC)	1,990	£16.99
6 (8) <i>Low Fat Cookbook</i>	Rosemary Conley (Century)	1,841	£4.99
7 (6) <i>Fighting Fit, Fighting Fit</i>	Janette Marshall (BBC)	1,584	£14.99
8 (9) <i>Birthday Letters</i>	Ted Hughes (Faber)	1,554	£16.99
9 (5) <i>Notes From a Big Country</i>	Bill Bryson (Doubleday)	1,499	£14.99
10 (-) <i>Station X: the codebreakers</i>	Michael Smith (Channel 4)	1,219	£14.99

SCIENCE

TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	WEEKLY SALES	PRICE
1 <i>Longitude</i>	Dava Sobel (Fourth Estate)	1,661	£5.99
2 <i>Station X: the codebreakers</i>	Michael Smith (Channel 4)	1,219	£14.99
3 <i>The Mars Mystery</i>	G Hancock & R Baual (Penguin)	687	£6.99
4 <i>Fermat's Last Theorem</i>	Simon Singh (Fourth Estate)	306	£5.99
5 <i>The Calendar</i>	David Ewing Duncan (Fourth Estate)	280	£12.99
6 <i>Earth Story</i>	Simon Lamb & David Sington (BBC)	200	£19.99
7 <i>How the Mind Works</i>	Steven Pinker (Penguin)	190	£9.99
8 <i>Unweaving the Rainbow</i>	Richard Dawkins (Alien Lane)	176	£20
9 <i>Between Silk and Cyanide</i>	Leo Marks (HarperCollins)	103	£19.99
10 <i>Dragonfly</i>	Bryan Burrough (Fourth Estate)	101	£17.99

SPOKEN WORD

CHRISTINA HARDYMENT



Classic Crimes of Passion
read by Derek Jacobi, CSA, 3hrs, £6.99

THIS WEEK's audio choices feature passions past and present, perfect escapist listening for those banished to bed with the '91. The Talkies Awards' Reader of the Year Derek Jacobi is probably best known at present for his portrayal of Brother Cadfael (available on audio from Hodder

Headline), but he comes magnificently into his own in reading CSA Telltapes' unusual selection of murderous tales with a passionate twist from authors as various as Louisa May Alcott, Algernon Blackwood, Guy de Maupassant and Wilkie Collins.



Come Together
read by Jack Davenport and Natasha Little, Random House, 2hrs £8.99

AUTHORS JOSIE Lloyd and Emlyn Rees hatched a neat idea along Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus lines with this novel in which boy and girl alternate in telling the story of their meeting, each picking up where the other left off. Room for much almost unbearable but horribly true to life misunderstandings, and a good deal of shrewd observation of current sexual mores (or rather amores). This "in your head" angle of approach works very well when read aloud, especially by such talented readers as Jack Davenport and Natasha "Becky Sharp" Little.

Dazzling horseplay around the pleasure-dome

Helen Stevenson revisits Lilliput with a female guide and enjoys a galloping satire on masculine follies ancient and modern



The Mistress of Lilliput
by Alison Fell, Doubleday, £12.99, 351pp

"SATIRE", WROTE Jonathan Swift, "is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own." If a narrative is a glass, then what shall we say of Lemuel Gulliver's face? Age may not have withered him, nor even the fierce sun of the southern seas, but 300 years have lent a perspective to his features which no woman is inclined to find appealing. If we remember him now it is usually in an image from children's abridgements, pegged to Lilliputian earth, mightily fallen and ridiculous, pinioned like some weird voodoo doll.

Meanwhile, Mrs Mary Gulliver stayed at home and brought up the

children, patiently bidding her time: "Like many of her sex my mistress was more interested in the mysterious continents of her own nature than in regions further flung". Now, at last, she has been given something to do. Alison Fell's narrator is Mrs Gulliver's doll, who owes equanimity to the fact that she is less susceptible to the sliding scale of self-regard and loathing than most women – being of an unvarying size.

Nothing daunted by her husband's brief visit home, at a time when he was suffering from severe Hippomania and unable to abide his own species, Mrs Gulliver adopts a cheery attitude. She resolves to go

and find him. Accordingly, she sets sail with her little wooden doll, hoping to make up for lost conjugal time. A cloak of wide-eyed naivety is standard dress-code for the ironist. Travels and travails do not dim Mary's optimism. Her experience of the exotic does not so much whet her appetite for a voyage of personal discovery as lead her more fervently to wish for a time when she may be re-united with her errant spouse.

In the meantime, she suffers her due ration of shipwrecks, sunstroke and persecutions. Her most memorable experiences occur on Lilliput, where the little people decide to punish her by proxy for her husband's

offences against their country. The construction of a stately pleasure dome is decreed, in which Mary will be displayed to a curious public. "The emperor has endorsed the establishment of a Popular Pleasure Palace, with opportunities for sport and leisure, and arcades for market stalls and penny amusements, for he is persuaded that such an enterprise will not only swell the coffers of the country but also distract the populace, whose minds dwell with resentment upon their penury." Most of the satire in this novel is directed at the familiar notion that women are keener on ecstasy than on enquiry. I enjoyed this brief instance

of plain contemporary pin-sticking. Gulliver is bound to be completely off his head by the time Mary catches up with him, but he was only ever a pretext. Given a choice between a humourless Hippomane (he is still inclined to the odd snort) and a giggly Frenchman obsessed with breeding strawberry plants, you might think she would have done better staying at home and getting to know a nice merchant or vicar. But some women just don't know what's good for them.

Words like sprightly, dazzling,

opener concealed in a lady's purse – itself concealed in a larger envelope, which is a literary form invented by men for men. The Mistress of Lilliput is an extraordinarily clever and impressive piece of writing, but it is not immune to the weaknesses of the genre – monotony, an atmosphere of relentless performance, the risk that the wind will change and the prose will stick like till the final sentence. Men call this consistency. Alison Fell is a superb writer, but by the end of this novel, I felt her skills were dwarfing a genre she had outgrown in the course of writing. I look forward to more of the same, but different.

Charlie, coke, cream, snow – the names change but the song remains the same...

COCAINE

phil strongman

AN INTOXICATING DEBUT NOVEL

Fantastically well-observed and incredibly readable... Brilliant!

MIXMAG

ABACUS

INSPIRATIONS

WRITER AND PHOTOJOURNALIST JOHN READER



The place
The sea. And any coastline, where breakers deliver the energy of the oceans to the beaches, the rocks and the tidal pools.

The play
Luigi Pirandello's Sir Characters in Search of an Author. The best sort of drama.

The film
The Passenger directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

The artwork
Any rock painting, where you can stand exactly where the painter stood thousands of years before.

The music
"Early one morning, just as the sun was rising..." – that song sung by a single, unaccompanied soprano voice, is an echo from the childhood of an evacuee. The simple, clear purity of it doesn't so much fill a space as create one.

John Reader's latest book is Africa: a biography of the continent, published by Penguin at £14.99

ergo

Books worth thinking about

see page 7 of
The Independent Magazine



Mud, mud, glorious mud: the Macintosh family in their garden, which they are planning to restore to its former glory

Martin Rickett

Water, water everywhere

GARDEN WORKSHOP: What is the best way to renovate a waterlogged garden in the Lake District? Anna Pavord offers a solution

Q WE MOVED recently from Cornwall to Cumbria and have inherited a garden of about half an acre which was last cared for 12 years ago. Neighbours have told us that this was once a lovely garden and we think that several of the remaining trees and bushes look interesting, if neglected. We have started to clear out the elder, hazel, sycamore, etc, that have seeded, and have begun to make a patch for a vegetable garden, but we have hit several problems.

The area outside the side door (and main entrance) becomes soggy when it rains. The levels are erratic. Can we make it drier? If so, how? I know it has rained a lot recently, but even the path sinks under water.

We know where we would like to put the vegetable/fruit garden, but have been told that nearby trees will take all the goodness out of the soil. If so, can we overcome this? I am used to a Cornish garden and also want to know how best to continue to grow my

favourite squashes, cape gooseberries, etc, in a northern climate.

We have a rough idea now of the original layout of the garden, but have requirements of our own, so the garden must evolve. The three children need an area of lawn; I need a herb garden and we want to keep a "wild" boundary next to the road.

However, we also want to work within the existing framework as much as possible and to incorporate some of the surviving trees and shrubs. How do we go about rescuing the neglected ones?

A EMMA MACKINTOSH, her husband Ross and their three children (Alex, who is six, five-year-old Katherine, and John, three) live in a long, low, white-harled farmhouse near Haweshead in the Lake District. The house is beautifully situated, sheltered by rising land and well screened by trees, including ancient beeches. People must have been gardening round this house since at least the 1600s and, despite the

recent neglect, the Macintoshes have taken on a place with some superb features.

An old stone wall marks the southern boundary of the garden and immediately behind that is a wonderfully wild stream (sorry - beck), hung with ferns and mosses. Along this boundary, somebody who knew his plants has set fine rhododendrons, acers and azaleas, some of them now 12-15ft high. The path to the kitchen door is made from huge black flagstones which continue round the south and west sides of the house. The site is flatish and the soil, though probably hungry, as many acid soils are,

looked light and easy to work.

Having taken on a house that was a ruin, and a garden that was completely impenetrable, I do not underestimate the slog that is needed to clear undergrowth and restore some sense of order and delight in a garden. Fortunately, Emma Macintosh seemed more than equal to the task.

Most importantly, she was keen to release the potential of the

garden. She felt (hooray!) that a garden un-gardened was a criminal waste of opportunity. And she had ideas and energy. At the moment, she is doing a textile design course, but had already dug an impressive vegetable plot and (with her husband) released many rhododendrons from choking bramble and elder. I felt like getting out my fork and joining her there and then.

Ross Macintosh trained as a land agent, so he will know better than I the best way to drain the land by the side door. Only time will tell how necessary this may be.

Although the Lake District was severely flooded on the day of my visit, I got to the Macintoshes' door dry-shod. But water is weird stuff, with a mind of its own. If it decides to be troublesome, a simple land drain exploiting the lie of the land towards the beck would keep it out of harm's way. The wide flagstone path at least prevents the area immediately around the house from churning into mud.

The patch the Macintoshes have chosen for their vegetable plot is

unlikely to suffer from the presence of apple trees at one end of it. The soil is light and stony, so will, anyway, need regular feeding. They are lucky in that they have access to as much farmyard manure as they want, and that a field gate leads from the lane directly into the lower part of the garden, close to the vegetable patch. A tractor could deliver a load of FYM without upsetting any other part of the garden.

But will Emma Macintosh be able to go on growing the squashes and other tender produce she enjoyed in her Cornish garden? I don't see why not. Although, geographically, they have made an enormous leap north, growing conditions may not be as different as she believes.

For a start, their Cumbrian house is sheltered. And it is low, on a level with Esthwaite Water opposite. It is also much sunnier; she says, than their Cornish house, which was tucked away in a deep coombe.

But she will need artificial help in extending the growing season. The Macintoshes have acquired a greenhouse and this, together with

some rolls of Agralan fleece to protect crops from early frosts, should be all she needs. She can start the squash seedlings in 3in pots on her window ledge, harden them off in the greenhouse and set them out in early June already well grown. Tomatoes will probably do better by the greenhouse than outside.

The layout of the garden was not entirely satisfactory. Mrs Macintosh had discovered two beds that seemed once to lie either side of a stone-edged path, but they were rather lost in the expanse of grass and did not relate to any other features in the garden. Nor did the strip of path between them link to any access from the house.

She wanted somewhere to grow herbs and flowers, but I did not feel this was the right place. The beds would always look as though they had been dumped on high by a passing ark. But the west side of the house joined on to a south-facing stone boundary wall, which

made a wonderfully warm corner, sheltering onto some huge flagstones. Protected as it was on two sides,

and with the best aspect in the garden, this would be the most natural place to make a large, squarish bed, where herbs could be mixed with bright annuals such as eschscholzia and Shirley poppies, with Iceland and Welsh poppies too. "I'm a very bright person," said Mrs Macintosh. "I love colour." Poppies, and other annuals, could deliver as much as she wanted.

There was space for a bench either side of the massive chimney stack, where you could sit with your back against the west wall of the house, looking out at the sun setting over Esthwaite. Thyme from the herb garden would soon creep out and colonise the cracks between the flagstones.

Unfortunately, there was already a snake in this Eden. An oil tank had got to the sunny south wall before the Macintoshes. Colour-washed trellis, covered with sweet peas or nasturtiums, will have to be thrown up as a disguise. Even so, it worried me. Who on earth could be mad enough to waste a south-facing wall in Cumbria on an oil tank?

CUTTINGS

NEWS FROM THE GARDENERS' WORLD



The sweet pea has been in Britain for 300 years

oak in Croydon; and an ancient churchyard yew in Charles Darwin's village of Downe. For details of the Great Trees and how to nominate one, contact the London Tree Forum, PO Box 15146, London WC2B 6SJ.

THE EAST ANGLIAN seedsmen Marshalls are inviting customers to trial a new potato, 'Osprey'. Anyone who orders two or more 5kg packs of potatoes from the catalogue will get five free 'Osprey' tubers. The potato was bred from 'Kestrel' and is an early maincrop variety, with good resistance to scab, and a smooth skin, marked with shallow purple eyes, like the Scottish favourite 'Carolina'.

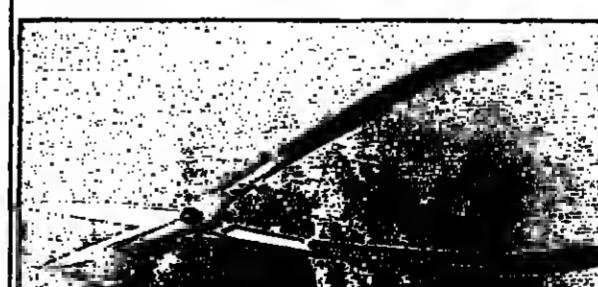
In Marshalls' own trials, 'Osprey' produced at least 5lb of potatoes from each plant and was ready to dig by late July.

Two dozen different kinds of potato are listed in Marshalls' catalogue, from 'Swift', the earliest of earlies, to 'Pink Fir Apple', the gourmet potato that need not be harvested until October. 'Pink Fir Apple' has another advantage, too. The tubers do not sprout in the sack at this time of the year, as so many other kinds do. Try it. Once you have tasted it, you will never want to be without it. For a copy of Marshalls' catalogue, write to them at Wisbech, Cambs PE13 2RF or call 01945 466711.

THE INDEPENDENT

Lightweight Gardening

Shears - only £19.95 inc. p&p



SAVE £10 OFF R.R.P.

Weighing in at just 24ozs, these super-slim Eckman shears are a real pleasure to use and so sharp, they'll even cut paper as neatly as a pair of scissors! They're manufactured from extremely tough but incredibly lightweight aluminium alloy. And at 2ft in length with razor sharp blades, they're longer than conventional shears and will slice through stems up to 1/4" thick.

The blades are hardened and tempered for extra durability and can easily be removed for reshaping or replacement if required. Aching muscles and fatigue are greatly reduced due to their fine balance, positive cutting action and overall lightness of construction.

The price to readers is just £19.95 including p&p and an Eckman 2 year no quibble guarantee - it represents a saving of £10 on the M.R.P.

Please send me _____ pair(s) of Lightweight Shears @ £19.95 per pair inc p&p.

I enclose a crossed cheque for £_____ addressed to **THE INDEPENDENT LIGHTWEIGHT SHEARS OFFER**, Truelib House, Lombard Road, London SW19 3TZ.

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Time to badger the scientists?

COUNTRY MATTERS



DUFF HART-DAVIS

Tim and Sarah Pain, who farm near Torthorw in Gloucestershire, have lost their entire dairy herd. Once they had 80 Friesians; but again and again their cows reacted to routine tests for bovine tuberculosis - transmitted, they are certain, by badgers.

Two weeks ago the last of the cows went for slaughter. The farm is now "closed down" - no cattle are allowed in or out. The compensation paid by the Government is not enough to keep the Pains going, and they are desperate at the loss of their livelihood.

So it was that Tim's sister-in-law June called a public meeting to air the whole question of badgers and TB, and on Monday night more than 200 people crowded into a local roadhouse to bear the views of experts working on the problem.

But the gathering nearly did not take place at all, because in the middle of the day the manager of the hostelry temporarily lost his nerve: fearing disruption by animal-rights activists, he ordered the event to be cancelled, and it took the organisers three frantic hours to convince him that there was no need to panic.

Such are the tensions aroused by Brock and his way of life.

As it turned out, no extremists appeared, and the meeting remained relatively good tempered; but there were plenty of barbed exchanges, and explosive emotions simmered beneath the surface.

The various speakers sketched in relevant recent history. Badgers are now a fully protected species, and nobody may kill them or interfere with their sets without special permission. Immunity from persecution by humans has sent the national population soaring, from about 250,000 in the late Eighties to more than 400,000 today.

The only large-scale cull now carried out is the unintentional one on the roads: some 50,000 animals are killed by vehicles every year.

The correlation between badgers and TB in cattle was first noticed in the Seventies, and the earliest cull of badgers by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Maff) was carried out on a farm in Dorset in 1975. Removing badgers from an area of 3,000 acres, by gassing and trapping, eliminated TB in cattle for the time being: a similar cull round Thorbury, in the Severn Vale, was equally successful.



TB or not TB? They may look cute but are badgers the cause of the bovine tuberculosis which is wiping out entire dairy herds?

Jack A Bailey/Ardea

Yet public sentiment in favour of badgers proved to be so strong that successive governments backed off from culling: gassing of sets was stopped in 1982, replaced by an interim policy of trapping and shooting, and in 1997 almost all control measures ceased.

Meanwhile, the number of herds infected with TB leapt from 143 in 1990 to 515 seven years later. The trouble is concentrated in Britain's South-west. Cornwall being the hardest-hit county. Gloucestershire the second worst.

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carry out a new programme of trials.

The latest idea is to run comparative experiments in 10 separate sets of "triplets", each to consist of three contiguous areas of similar size. In one - the "proactive" area - all badgers will be caught in baited cage traps and shot. In the second, the "reactive" area, badgers will be culled only around sites of infection in cattle; in the third, the survey area, only general observations will be made. The first culls will already have been carried out at Putford, in Devon, where more than 220 badgers have been eliminated.

Prof Bourne was at pains to emphasise the need for a full scientific investigation. "The wholesale eradication of badgers is not a strategy we can adopt for the long term," he said. His team is searching for a "sustainable policy".

There was no doubt his expertise or his sincerity. But he talked for far too long - 45 minutes - and when he drifted off into such rarefied concepts as the need for "multi-risk variate analysis of retrospective data", he lost most of his audience. Angry murmurs began to arise, in ripe Gloucestershire accents: "That's enough bloody science. Let's have some common sense."

More down-to-earth was Dr. Chris Cheeseman, the man in charge of a long-running experiment, in Woodchester Park, near Stroud, where badgers have been baited with peanuts and golden syrup, captured, tested, released, radio-tracked and generally studied for more than 15 years.

Research in that area has thrown up many anomalies. Numbers of badgers in the long, wooded valley are extraordinarily high - 25 adults to the square kilometre; but there appears to be no relationship between population density and the incidence of disease.

On the contrary, infestations seem to go in cycles, and outbreaks of TB apparently occur as a result of badgers changing their patterns of movement.

Thus human intervention, in the form of culling and the creation of voids, may make matters worse rather than better. As Dr Cheeseman put it, "perturbation appears to be the downside of control".

In his view TB is mostly transmitted through urine, droppings and saliva deposited on grassland, especially permanent pasture, where badgers hunt for worms, and much of their contamination is placed along "linear features" such as walls, ditches and hedges. In conditions favourable to the TB bacillus, it can survive for up to 11 months in this environment.

All this was good, interesting stuff. Yet the burden of the evening was that scientists still have a poor understanding of the subject. Why

- people wanted to know - has Maff been so dilatory and secretive about badgers for the last two decades?

Why are we still so far from producing vaccines that would immunise both badgers and cattle?

What above all, is going to happen in the next seven years that is estimated. Professor Bourne's team will need to complete its trials? In the view of Maff, the situation in the South-west is already out of control.

What farmers want is a Government policy that will enable more badger culls to be made in hot-spots where the incidence of TB is particularly severe. As one woman put it, "The crazy thing is, it's illegal to kill the vermin that are causing the trouble. If it were rats or rabbits, we could take matters into our own hands. But because it's badgers, our hands are tied."

The difficulty is, most people do not see badgers as vermin; there would be an outcry if widespread

culling were reintroduced. A notable absentee from Monday's meeting was Dr Elaine King, Conservation Officer for the National Federation of Badger Groups (NFBG) and a leading champion of the species.

The federation, which has 85 groups and 20,000 members, has been pressing for more open-mindedness on the whole question; but Dr King herself had been warned off attending, as it was thought her presence might cause chaos. She did, however, send a representative in the form of Pauline Kidner, who delighted the audience by admitting that the NFBG is in favour of culling animals known to be infected.

That was one of the few crumbs of comfort the farmers derived from an evening full of interest but offering little hope of immediate relief. As several speakers remarked, the issues involved - unlike the face of the animal under scrutiny - are anything but black and white.

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BLOOMSBURY



Worms are a favourite snack for badgers Ardea

NATURE NOTES

EARTHWORMS FORM the most important item in a badger's diet. They are made vulnerable by their habit of coming to the surface whenever the weather is warm, and lying out during the hours of darkness.

They cannot see or hear, but they are sensitive to light and vibration and usually keep one end anchored in a tunnel so that they can beat a quick retreat if they sense danger. (It is the four pairs of chaetae, or bristles, on each segment that enable the creatures to move by bodily contractions.) But badgers hunt so stealthily that they often take them by surprise, scoffing several within a minute,

and one animal may put away 200 worms during a single night. Moles also depend largely on earthworms for sustenance, and many birds eat them with relish.

Fortunately worms exist in immense quantities: it is estimated that an acre of good pasture contains from 100,000 to 3 million. They take a year to mature, and live up to 10 years.

They eat decaying organisms, but also take in soil and tiny pebbles. Their tunnelling and feeding aerate and drain the soil, and worms also improve its structure by drawing organic material into their burrows.

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The Aegean's crescent of fire

A midwinter visit to Santorini fully reveals the volcanic cataclysm that has shaped this extraordinary Greek island. By Simon Calder

Olympic scandals – they've been in the news all week, so here's another one: it's a scandal that about the only way to reach the Aegean island of Santorini in winter is on the Greek national airline, Olympic. Consequently you will pay a small fortune to get there, and you may not be able to leave when you planned. But while the means may be less than ideal, the end justifies the journey.

To stand at the top of the sheer cliff that vanishes into the Aegean is to feel you are on the edge of disaster. Wintry clouds glower darkly, while slick, black rocks usher your eyes down to the surf crashing with fury and futility against the western shore.

Let your gaze follow the white-flecked crescent of coastline and, when the land ends, allow your imagination to complete the circle, as it might a young moon. The lunar analogy is apt, because looming from the sea are heaps of debris straight from the NASA props department. The word "calamity" is barely appropriate for what happened here.

There came a sound, as if from within the earth.

Zeus's hollow thunder boomed, awful to hear.

The horses lifted heads towards the sky.

And pricked their ears; while strange fear fell on us.

Euripides was writing five centuries before Christ, but the event he was quite possibly describing happened at least a millennium earlier. At some fateful instant between 1500 and 1625BC, the always abrasive plate tectonics of the eastern Mediterranean culminated in a catastrophic eruption that tore the core from an island the size of the Isle of Wight. It wasn't the Atlantis of myth, but it was a thriving community.

When you survey the surviving fragments of one of the biggest volcanic eruptions in the past 10 millennia, you feel in alarmingly close contact with the earth's crust. Present-day Santorini (also known as Thira) comprises a scattering of craters only tentatively attached to the rest of the planet.

The impact of the erupting volcano changed the ancient world, but in Greece there is clearly no such concept as seismic blight; even though little remained beyond a semicircle resembling a half-submerged Olympic ring, man clawed his way back to the largest surviving fragment of the island. Santorini has found a post-apocalyptic role as a community dependent on agriculture and tourism.

YOU ARE probably a public-spirited sort of person, keen to enhance the enjoyment of people who follow in your holiday footsteps. So when, on the plane home from your package holiday, you are given a questionnaire to fill in, you dutifully appraise everything from the hotel check-in to the in-flight service, in the hope that your views will lead to happier travels for others.

If you have done this on a Thomson holiday, prepare to be directed to a new travel agent. Britain's biggest holiday company has built up a mailing list of people who have filled in a "customer satisfaction questionnaire" on their holidays in recent years. This week, the database was put to use when half a million households were sent mailshots urging people to change their travel agent – in my case, recommending that I try one 200 miles away.

The "Thomson Preferred Agent" is Miss Ellie's International of Heston Chapel, in Greater Manchester. No doubt it is a fine agency. But I like my



Climb the highest point of the island – Mount Ilias, around 600 metres above the simmering sea – and you can see how scrubby the repopulation has sprawled across the eastern slope.

Luckily, Santorini's main town, Fira, embraces all the values of an idyllic Cycladic settlement: a mix of delicate white cottages on the crest of the caldera, laced with narrow lanes that resonate with church bells. In summer, torrents of tourists swirl through the town, but in mid-winter your only company is likely to be a community of funny little cats. Your problems, meanwhile, are likely to be considerable. The good thing about the Greek islands out of season, it is commonly said, is that they are wonderfully quiet. That inoffensive word "quiet" conceals a consensus of closure, the concept that an entire island can be operated on a skeleton staff. The Volcano Hotel, the Atlantis restaurant and the Enigma disco are all shut down, as are almost all of the "rooms" that cater for the summer's fiddlers of backpackers.

Furthermore, the weather is frequently foul. I am staying at the ambitiously named Porto Fira Hotel, which resembles a warren of whitewashed Hobbit holes. The rain has been bombarding for a couple of days now, splashing against the whitewashed walls. Every so often the grey is enlivened by a flash of lightning that heralds an Atlantean rumbling of thunder. The electric heater in the room has just fused again I tried to dry my sodden socks on it. At 2am last night, the only surviving mosquito in the northern hemisphere managed to insinuate itself into my room, despite the door and window being sealed against the cold, and dined famously.

Now and again, though, the sun emerges and makes it all worthwhile, when shafts of gold light play poetically upon the ragged wilderness. And, if you meander along to the patch of ground that serves as a bus station, you can travel around



All quiet now – but for how long? The volcano that shaped the geography of Santorini is still active

Simon Calder

the crescent of Santorini to a place where the solitude of winter is rewarded.

You know Pompeii? Imagine a city twice as old, which suffered the same volcanic smothering but is preserved even more perfectly. You may doubt this when the bus-driver drops you off by a iron gate in the far south west of Santorini. But persevere: wander into a field with a smattering of buildings and beyond, you find a slender ravine covered with brittle corrugated iron. This ungainly roof serves as insulation for

the miraculous resurrection of life in the second millennium BC.

Four or five thousand people lived in Akrotiri before the eruption. They were accomplished mariners, which provided them with both wealth from trade, and ideas from ancient Egypt. Nearly 4,000 years ago their city was accomplished in its technology – the walls of two- and three-storey buildings bear witness to advanced engineering – and its artistry, with vibrant wall paintings and elaborate pottery depicting a sophisticated society.

The art has been appropriated by Athens, and you will need to visit room 46 of the National Archaeological Museum in the capital to gasp at the intense images. But the fortunate winter visitor may encounter Professor Christos Doumas, who has been excavating the site for three decades. As you wander around streets whose tangle mimic the modern-day town, he will explain yet more similarities to the 20th century: how certain buildings served as shops and banks to a busy, wealthy community. And he will

point out the grave of Spiridon Marinatos, the man whose meticulous research led him to uncover Akrotiri beneath many metres of volcanic dust in 1967. Professor Marinatos died in a fall at the site in 1974.

Intriguingly, his is the only human corpse known to exist in Akrotiri. The citizens appear to have been fully aware of the vulnerability of their location. It appears that before the eruption they fled the city, thoughtfully leaving jars full of grain beneath doorways – then, as now, this was the safest place in an earthquake.

Just as a door frame could not withstand the weight of tons of volcanic ash, so there remains no trace of the population ever having made safe landfall, given the scale of the tidal wave that accompanied the eruption.

Euripides again: *To the sea-beaten shore! We looked, and saw a monstrous wave that soared/ Into the sky.*

The reverberations of the volcano are still being felt. Last century, for example, the French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps used volcanic ash quarried from Santorini to make the impervious concrete essential to the building of the Suez Canal – a fundamental artery for the modern world.

Back on the island, though, there remains one more ritual for the winter visitor. If you can gather together a few stragglers left over from the summer season, you can charter a fishing boat for about £50 from the timid little harbour that huddles at the foot of the cliff. From here, you

can appreciate the wide-screen wonder of the rock face, and discern many more colours than the black that first registered, with electric greens and rust reds prominent.

The boatman will steer out across the submerged crater, towards a recent creation: the island of Nea Kameni ("new burnt island"), directly above the centre of the crater. It has emerged over the past three centuries, but fits no preconceptions of what a Greek island should look like; the earth has simply spewed volcanic wreckage into the Aegean, with the lava freezing where it fell.

Talking of freezing: if you are feeling brave, or foolhardy, or working for a radio producer keen on some audio verite, you may plunge from a boat into the wintry water and paddle frantically around in search of the promised 40°C currents.

The sulphuric steam rising from the centre of the island draws you along a narrow inlet, and reminds you of Euripides's "boiling blood and breath from the deep sea". But soon the crush of rocks gets too intense and you retreat to the cooler, choppier Aegean, where you can reflect on the fascination about Thira that goes way beyond its rugged beauty – a place where history meets hydrodynamics, vulcanology meets archaeology, and science meets fiction.

Gazing at the destruction poses some big questions. Where and when will there next be an eruption of such magnitude? Could Thira itself ever change the world again? And where's that towel?

Getting there:
Simon Calder's ticket – from London via Athens to Santorini, with a side-trip to Crete – cost £359 on Olympic Airways (0171-409 3400).

Once the summer flights begin and the ferries start a more regular service, it will be much cheaper to reach the island. The peak-season alternatives are as follows:

(1) Taking a scheduled flight from London to Athens on British Airways (0845 223111), Cronos Air (0171-580 3500), easyJet (0870 6 000 000), Olympic Airways (0171-409 3400) or Virgin Atlantic (01992 747747), followed by a ferry from Piraeus.

(2) The same idea but using a

charter from a range of UK airports to Athens.

(3) A charter flight to Heraldion, on Crete, and a ferry from there.

(4) A direct charter flight from Gatwick to Santorini, perhaps as part of a package; Kosmar Holidays (0181-822 6999) is one of relatively few companies to go there, starting in May.

Getting around: Bus services around Santorini operate year-round, with a maximum fare of about £1. Car rental is cheap and widely available. Cycling is not a happy way to travel around the island in winter.

If you plan to visit Santorini as part of an island-hopping itinerary, then *Greek Island*

Hopping 1998 by Frewin Poffey (Thomas Cook, £12.95) is the essential survey of all ferry services plus entertainingly pithy descriptions of the islands. The 1999 edition (same price) will be published on 12 March.

More information: Hellenic Tourism Organisation, 4 Conduit Street, London W1R 0DZ (0171-734 5997). A good source of books is Hellenic Bookservise, 91 Fortress Road, London NW5 1AG (0171-267 9459).

The Volcano That Changed the World, presented by Simon Calder and produced by David Sharp, will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 at 8pm next Thursday, 4 February



SIMON CALDER
Filled in a form on a Thomson holiday? Prepare to be directed to a new agent...

In a spirit of encouraging competition, I shall be paying a visit to Miss Ellie's International in the next couple of weeks. So far, the best deal to reach it is on Virgin Trains, for £19 return. I wonder if there's anything cheaper? It's at times like this that you need a good travel agent.

NIC STUBBS, of Northampton, had a less happy experience with a branch of Going Places. Referring to last week's story

about airlines pretending that taxes will rise from Monday, he writes: "If you think airlines are being sneaky about price rises, Going Places are pretty blatant about it. Last week I went to book a return flight for one from Birmingham to Dublin, for the end of April. I was quoted a reasonable price of £70, plus £10 tax and £1 SAR (whatever that is)."

"Then the assistant said 'Oh, that comes to less than £100, so we charge you £10 extra.' I went to an independent travel agent the following day and booked my flight without any surcharge."

I can appreciate that they may not have made a huge amount from my booking at either travel agent, but I know which one I shall do business with in the future."

Mr Stubbs also hints that the second agent may have been rather more knowledgeable: "The independent travel agent knew the code for Dublin airport without having to ask me."

The code in question is the tricky-to-remember DUE.

FIVE MONTHS from tonight, expect waiting from cigarette and drink manufacturers. Duty-free sales on intra-EU flights and ferries come to an end on 30 June. The demise of duty-free with Europe influenced P&O Stena Line's decision to end the ferry link between Newhaven and Dieppe. As Gerard Gilbert predicted in these pages last month, the plug has now been pulled and the last ship will sail tomorrow.

Happy, a rival ferry company thinks it can make a go of the historic route. HoverSpeed (0990 240241) starts a summer-only service on 10 April.

This is excellent news for eclipse fans, who will be able to watch the sun's disappearance on 11 August from Normandy. The ferry is already booked for that date, but three- and five-day return tickets are available.

I love to view the eclipse from west Cornwall instead, but Great Western Trains yesterday said it was still unable to take bookings for the event. The train operator said Railtrack has not yet revealed what services it will allow to Penzance in August.

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Here's some we didn't do earlier

The film *Hideous Kinky* has triggered a rush to Morocco. Guide-book writer Barnaby Rogerson offers the latest insider advice



WHY more British tourists flock to Marrakech after the release of the film 'Hideous Kinky' starring Kate Winslet?

Sophie Baker

It is, as they say in Morocco, the "English Season". Like some strange breed of bird that migrates to its own discordant calendar, the English have taken to visiting Morocco in February and March. These are the very months that the country is considered to be off-season by the rest of Europe.

The relish with which we tackle the prospect of a bit of weather is our last remaining national characteristic, transcending the divisions of class, age, race and fashionable intelligence. The chance of being delayed by the odd flash flood in a desert wadi, or by a snowstorm at a pass in the High Atlas mountains, excites rather than diminishes the interest.

This year, the English season will be even more pronounced due to the release of *Hideous Kinky*, Esther Freud's warm and funny evocation of a hippy family in existential crisis in mid-Seventies

Marrakech, that has been made into a movie. Kate Winslet, who plays the mother, is set to revive our passion for all things Moroccan, starting, of course, with its men.

It is also "my season". I get invited to tea to dinner, and get charmed on the telephone by a spreading nexus of friends of friends who want to talk their Moroccan holiday plans through with me. It is flattering to be wanted. They want routes; they want restaurants; they want hotels; they want a three-week forecast on the weather; they want telephone numbers.

So I talk numbers - my numbers. "Look at page 528 for the Palais Salam", "look at page 175 for the Mahdi in the mountains". It is a sad and obvious attempt to boost the sales of my guide and history books. But they want more. They want special things: yet unwritten tips; unknown restaurants; and undiscovered ruins. It is no good pretending that you have held nothing

back. You must produce a plum: one juicy bit of intimate travel advice offered up in a husbed tone; a whispered piece of "for your ears only" confidence.

It is an easy task. By their nature, guidebooks are already out of date by the time they are printed. Such-and-such a hotel has closed or opened while restaurants change with the wind, or the chef in the words of Saki, "she was a good cook as cooks go, and as good cooks go she went". So here it is: the inside track on Morocco during the last 12 months.

One new but gorgeous small hotel to report is in a converted courtyard townhouse deep within the old walled city of Marrakech. La Maison Arabe is reclusive but fairly easy to find on your second or third attempt. It stands on one of the alleys opposite the great 16th-century Bab Doukkala Mosque. It is as removed from the tourist throng as a visit to this city in the Thirties.

The restaurant was closed on my next visit and now, some 20 years later, it has been beautifully ren-

vated by Fabrizio Ruspoli. Fabrizio is an Italian prince - or if he isn't he could be. In the hotel hall there hangs a portrait of his grandfather, Edmondo, outdoing any mere Galinsborough boy in the elegance of his ruffs and lace.

Ruspoli is, in my case, part of the expatriate landscape: his grandmother was a redoubtable figure in Tangier's highly competitive society;

his aunt kept wolfhounds on her farm in the Ourika valley, and the great restaurants nearby, such as Charles de Posa's Villa Rosa, seem to be run by his devoted friends.

La Maison Arabe has just 11 rooms and serves no meals, aside from breakfast and tea. It has no pool but instead boasts a succession of elegant, well-connected guests.

The only other major event in the Moroccan hotel world has been the sale and closure of the celebrated Palais Jamai Hotel in Fez for a much-needed renovation. This once acclaimed hotel, the unsung star of

Paul Bowles' novel *The Spider's House*, has been disappointing visitors for years. Hopefully the new owners will cherish the splendid old dining room and the remnants of the old palace garden that were not destroyed when they built the swimming pool.

The central role of the Palais Jamai has anyway been usurped by such places as the newly opened La Maison Bleue. This the 100-year-old townhouse of a distinguished old Fassi family, the El Abbadi's, has become an opulent courtyard restaurant where the food has won plaudits even from the fastidious locals.

The upstairs, its corridors lined with old lawbooks and leather-bound commentaries, has been converted into three suites, each complete with dressing rooms, a sitting room and cavernous bathrooms.

Its position, just off Place de l'Istiglal, one of the centres for the evening pose, and opposite the walled garden of the Batha Palace

Museum, could hardly be bettered.

From the cafe on the rooftop you can look out across the massed roofs of the three component cities of medieval Fes. It stands on the edge of the 13th-century walled quarter of Fes el Jedid, within five minutes walk of the Bab Boujeloud gate into the ancient alleys of Fes el Bali. It is owned and managed by Mehdi el Abbadi, the grandson of the Cadi, the Muslim judge who first built the house.

La Maison Arabe, 1 Derb Assehbe, Bab Doukkala, Marrakech. For a reservation speak to Nabila Dakir, tel 00 212 4 39 12 33, fax 00 212 4 44 37 15. Prices are between £120-200 for a room.

La Maison Bleue, 2 Place de l'Istiglal, Batha, 30,000 Fes, tel and fax 00 212 5 74 18 43. Prices start at £150.

Barnaby Rogerson is the author of the 'Cadogan Guide to Morocco' (£12.99)

Trouble spots:
Vietnamese border crossings.
"My wife and I have just returned from a tailor-made package, which was intended to give us a taste of southern China and Vietnam using the recently restored rail link between Kunming and Hanoi. When we arrived at Hekou, the Chinese border town, the customs police indicated in pidgin English that our Vietnam visas were no good. The visas had been obtained months in advance, via our British travel agent, from the Vietnamese Embassy in London."

"The border police said that they were not valid and a \$400 (£250) fine would sort the problem out. Needless to say, we were outraged by such a large demand and sat tight in our seats refusing to give any money. I asked to telephone the British mission in Hanoi, but was refused amidst a lot of laughter by the police officers. After considerable protests, I was taken from the train, leaving my wife alone with five police officers."

Mike and Anne Reynolds, Kent

This report is from the new edition of *Wanderlust* magazine, published yesterday, price £2.80; subscriptions: 01753 620426.

The new edition offers a free passport cover (for the Euro-style document). *Wanderlust* has teamed up with *The Independent* to offer a free copy of the magazine, plus a passport cover, to the 10 best tales of tricky/trivial border crossings. Send your entry to: Passport Travel Desk, *The Independent*, One Canada Square, London E14 5DL, to arrive by eleventh on Monday, 8 Feb.

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SOMETHING TO DECLARE

NEWS FROM THE TRAVEL WORLD

Bargain of the week:

Italy, Denmark or Germany for £60. The winter fares war on air routes to Europe intensifies next week when Go (0845 60 54321) launches a five-day seat sale. From 7am next Monday until 11pm on Friday 5 February, the British Airways offshoot is cutting prices on all its routes.

Fares from Stansted to Milan, Venice, Copenhagen and Munich are set at £60 return. Tickets to Rome, Lisbon and Bologna cost £70, while Edinburgh is £40.

The deal applies for travel from 15 February to 25 March. Travel is barred on Fridays and Sundays. A two-night minimum stay is required.

True or False:

The only way to reach South America's leading tourist attraction is on foot or aboard a Russian-built helicopter?

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this week by a landslide. Walking to the historic site along the Inca Trail is still possible, but latest reports say it is very crowded. The alternative is a shuttle service operated by a single ex-Soviet helicopter, for a fare of around £100 return. The track is unlikely to be repaired for another two weeks.

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Freedom of the slopes

If you see someone zooming down the piste on what looks like a chair on skis, don't be alarmed. It's just one of the many 'adaptive' skiers enjoying themselves. By Stephen Wood

Just after Christmas, I met Karen Darke at the apartment in which she was staying at Avoriaz, in the Portes du Soleil ski area. It was late afternoon, and the place seemed to be full of large Scottish men washing, cooking and making phone calls. (Maybe it was just that they were moving around a lot - she told me later that there were only three of them, and that two weren't Scottish.) But despite the cramped conditions, she was enjoying herself.

"I've had a few nightmare experiences in the Alps," she said. "I've stayed in places that had lots of steps and narrow doors, where I've had to drag myself around on wet slushy floors. It's great to be in accommodation like this."

Darke broke her back in a climbing accident in 1992, and was paralysed from the chest down. Having skied for just a couple of days before the accident, she took it up seriously afterwards because it was the best way of getting around in the mountains.

The reason she chose Avoriaz for this, her seventh skiing trip, was that it is one of the three Alpine resorts featured in a new adaptive-skiing programme for skiers with physical disabilities. The holidays are organised by the tour operator Erna Low in conjunction with the retailer Snow+Rock, which provides specialised ski equipment. In most cases, the apparatus used is a sit-ski: a sort of bucket seat mounted on one or two skis, which the skier steers with the help of short poles fitted with skids at the bottom.

Erna Low - which has been selling skiing holidays for 67 years - launched the programme as a result of hiring Jon Lind as a sales executive for the 1997/8 season. Lind, a 29-year-old Londoner, had been a ski rep and instructor for several years when a cousin invited him to join a group of skiers she was taking to Switzerland for the Back-Up Trust, which organises sports activities for people with spinal cord injuries.

After teaching able-bodied holiday-makers, Lind found it exciting to be with people who were so motivated; they weren't holidaying but facing a challenge, and getting satisfaction from their achievements".

The experience led him to set up a company with a friend who had suffered a spinal injury. It organised adrenaline sports trips for people with physical disabilities. But New Trax, as the company was called, was under-financed, and says Lind, "after two years it became obvious that it couldn't survive". So he

The three resorts in the Erna Low adaptive skiing brochure, Avoriaz, La Plagne and Tignes, all have schools for disabled skiers. This means not only that specialist tuition is available, but also that the lift staff, for example, are familiar with the sit-ski.

That gave the programme a start; still, there were innumerable problems to be solved both in the resorts - wheelchair access to ski-in, ski-out apartments (and, particularly, to their bathrooms, which require widened doorways), insurance, ski-lifts - and on the journey to and

at the same price (although each adaptive skier and one helper get a 50 per cent discount on ski-lift passes from the resorts).

For adaptive skiers going to Avoriaz, there is an added incentive: this season Erna Low employs as its resort rep a friend of Lind's, Andrew Moore, an experienced adaptive-ski instructor who is himself a wheelchair user.

"His basic job is to check reservations, receive clients and sort out their problems," says Lind.

"But for the new programme it's essential that things go smoothly, and safely."

"So I wanted Andrew to go through a security brief with the adaptive skiers, taking them through the lifts and so on. Some of them may not speak a word of French, and they need to know what to say, for example, when they are disembarking from a lift. That's a basic safety requirement."

(Unfortunately, Moore injured his shoulder and has had to return to Britain for physiotherapy; but he will be back in Avoriaz for the programme's busiest period, when the majority of this season's 26 adaptive-skiing clients will be holidaying in the Alps.)

Organising the programme is highly labour-intensive: Lind is busy with his sales job during the day and works on the adaptive skiing programme ("it takes a lot of time, a lot of letters") in the evenings and at weekends.

Yellowees-Bound says of the programme that she has "no hopes for it commercially. I will be pleased if, after the first few years, it doesn't make a loss. But after 15 years selling holidays, it's nice to put something back into skiing."

I spoke to Karen Darke again last week. She is a 29-year-old who works as a geologist in Aberdeen. How, I asked, did she look back on the trip? It was "a real pleasure", she said, "to be so independent".

For details of the adaptive skiing programme, contact Jon Lind on 0171-584 2841

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It's never too late to learn

Have the joys of skiing passed you by for ever? Roger Mills says it ain't necessarily so



Skiing lessons aren't just for children Adrian Myers

SKIING USED to seem to me a bit like playing a musical instrument. If you wanted to do it you had to start young. Having reached the second half of my thirties without having got going, it never occurred to me to think about trying. Then, at the ripe old age of 38, I married someone who could ski rather well, and a year later I was heading for Passo Rolle, a small resort in the Italian Dolomites.

I had heard that ski resorts were full of distractingly able five-year-olds and, even though there was a handful of other anxious-looking older beginners on the slopes, sharing the discomfort didn't seem likely to make the self-consciousness any easier. But within half an hour, the problems of staying upright were taking up all the mental capacity I had available. What I wasn't expecting was

how fundamentally unnatural the physical experience of skiing would seem at first. Take turning corners. Like most people, my feelings about cornering were based on being on a bicycle, where, if you lean to the left, you go to the left. Nothing so simple for the ski world. On skis, when you lean to the left you go to the right.

Then there is the question of what to do on a steep slope. Faced with a slope, my instinct was to lean back. But if you lean away from the slope when you are on skis, your legs shoot from under you. Making yourself lean forward is the trick, instantly producing a sense of stability. But try getting your body to do that on day one,

"Adults think too much," says Fiona Coats, an instructor who runs one of the ski schools at Aviemore. "Teaching children is easy because they just copy what you do without really realising it. With older people you can see them concentrating too hard, trying to grasp the technique intellectually."

Chilling out is all very well, but skiing, at the very beginning, can be quite alarming. The abiding image I have of my first day is of standing at the top of the nursery slope, feeling both distinctly uneasy and that I was rather pathetic to be feeling distinctly uneasy.

So when, exactly, does the fun start? It didn't take long to acquire a degree of competence. Unless you are critically lacking in co-ordination, almost anyone, however old, is getting down the nursery slopes com-

fortably after four or five days. Another week and you're weaving past stricken beginners and wondering if it's time you went back to the hire shop to get your equipment upgraded.

"Getting fit before you start helps enormously," says Fiona Coats. "Many people come here having done no exercise at all, thinking that skiing is just effortlessly gliding downhill."

Coats recommends running, cycling or any exercise that gets the legs moving. Another personal tip, is going for one-to-one tuition in the early days. It may be more expensive but it will have you on your feet (and staying on them) much sooner.

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Fresh but definitely not flirty

A brief visit to Christchurch will uncover this Dorset town's quiet charm. By Donald Hiscock

Fresh air - that's what Dorset is best for, especially near the coastal town of Christchurch. The idyllic town can be seen from the Red House Museum, take afternoon tea, and have their photographs taken beside the town ducking stool, or in the stocks beneath the castle mound. But for those of us with the legs and lungs for a hearty stroll, it is best to get out of Christchurch itself and on to its watery margins.

The Dorset town that used to be in Hampshire and used to be called Twynham is now a quiet neighbour of bustling Bournemouth. It sits at the confluence of the Avon and Stour rivers, which flow into a harbour that in turn flows with a fierce current into Christchurch Bay, slap bang opposite The Needles at the westernmost tip of the Isle of Wight, on the other side of the Solent.

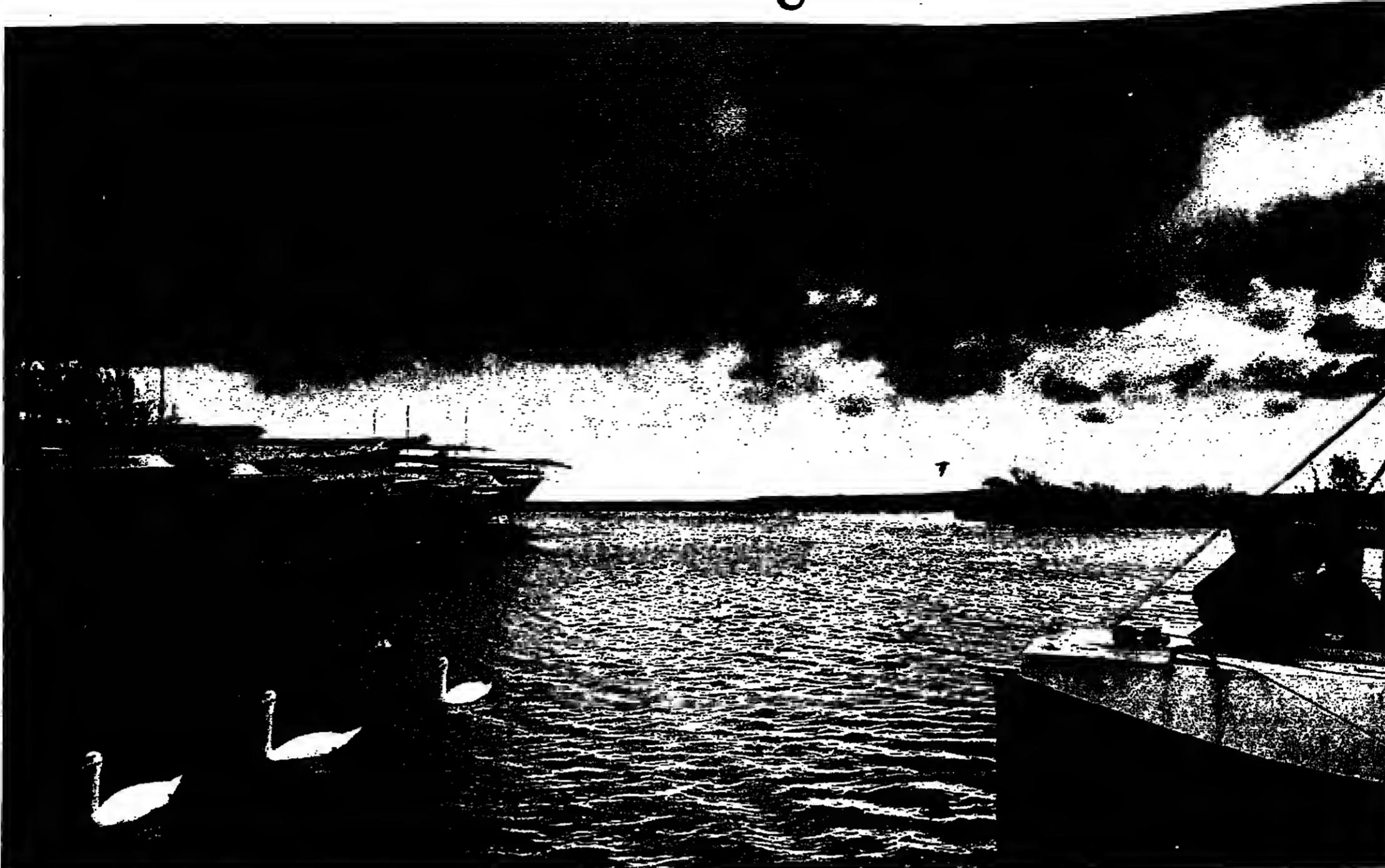
Christchurch's beautiful situation is perfect for improving your health. Stand at the quay end of the over-familiar swans and decide which way to go around a circuit of the harbour. I favour the anti-clockwise route. Cross over by ferry to the village of Wick on the Bournemouth side of the Stour. From here you can pick up the well-signposted Stour Valley Way out towards Hengistbury Head.

Hengistbury, excavated by archaeologists as a settlement in the Iron and Bronze Ages, is now a nature reserve. The view at the top of this sandy hillock is spectacular. Look across along the Dorset coast to the apartment blocks of Bournemouth and beyond to the Isle of Purbeck. Turn right to look down on Christchurch harbour and how it is almost closed up, pincer-like, by the spit of land that pushes out of the end of the Head.

The shallow harbour is ideal for novice sailors, sailboarders and potterers in small craft. The view of the 900-year-old Priory Church which gives the town its name is only spoilt by a development of marine houses, all white wood and showy atriums, at the feet of the handsome Norman and Perpendicular grey mass of the priory.

The church is worth a visit when you get back to the town. It has the feel of a small cathedral inside and houses some curious attractions, such as the Miraculous Beam and the Loft Museum. This is not, as my son was disappointed to learn, a museum about lfts, but a room over the lady chapel that used to be a school for novice monks; it now holds information about the Priory.

The same son was also dis-



Christchurch's shallow harbour - ideal for novice sailors, sailboarders and potterers in small craft, as long as they steer clear of the over-familiar swans

Tom Pilston

pointed to learn that he wasn't allowed to climb the 176 steps to the top of the tower "you have to be over 10," I told him. He went off instead and performed aerial tricks with his Yo-Yo frighteningly close to some delicate medieval carvings.

When you come down the path of

Hengistbury Head, approaching the entrance to the harbour and roughly at the half-way point of the walk, you set foot on a narrow strip of beach. A huddle of huts occupies the sand, some facing in towards Christchurch and others looking out at The Needles. Aficionados of beach huts

may like to know that these are in the de luxe category: they sleep families and have kitchens. With some pretension you could refer to them as "chalets". I am told by one of their owners that they change hands for more than £25,000 each.

There's a little community out

here on this narrow strip of sand. A land train, the Noddy Train, not only provides pleasure rides for summer visitors, but operates all year to transport hut dwellers back to the car park on the Bournemouth side of the harbour. Given the right weather, after a day on the sand I

would rate this as one of my great train journeys of the world.

To get across the harbour entrance you have to take a ferry from opposite the beach cafe. To complete the anti-clockwise circuit go over the short distance to Haven Quay at Mudeford, where you can

buy fresh seafood and have a drink at the pub. However, a direct return to Christchurch by ferry can be made from the same jetty. Take a leisurely paddle back in a wooden motor launch to the priory, looking out for heron and other birds lurking in the reeds of the river Stour.

Crossing to Haven Quay means that you get to walk more through residential streets in Mudeford than through marshland. But it is worth going out on to Stamp Marsh, another nature reserve. From here you have a fair trudge back into Christchurch, but there are several good pubs for food along the way.

With small children the boat journey back up the river is a treat. On a warm weekend the ferry meanders past waving sailboats in all sizes of craft. Dribble past the priory stop and alight at the end of the route at Tuckton Tea Gardens. During the summer (which officially begins hereabouts at Easter) you can sit back next to a putting green in a restful, old-fashioned, typically English kind of riverside setting.

Christchurch tourist information: 01202 471780

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The same son was also dis-

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5. Brownsea Island 01202 707744

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Island open from 27 March-3 October daily, 10am-5pm and in July and August until 6pm.

HUGH RIDDELL

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Take a walk on the quintessentially English side

Undulating countryside, Norman churches and views to ancient chalk horses are among the highlights of a Cotswolds winter walk. By David Viner

THE COTSWOLDS are full of clichés: stone is honey-coloured, villages nestle, everything is quintessential. But winter adds a twist to this idyll. And the best way to appreciate this is by walking through the almost impossibly lovely landscape.

This bridleway walk in a circuit of four villages (and a fifth if you fancy) takes you right into the heart of the Cotswolds. The landscape gently undulates, the views are extensive, and the villages are some of the most attractive in England.

The churches are built almost entirely of local stone, originally Norman but with lots of Perpendicular rebuilding, and another (often less popular) refurbishment in Victorian times. A strong west tower, quiet, village interiors and tidy graveyards complete the picture. And thankfully they are mostly open during the day.

Start in Cold Aston, or Aston Blank if you prefer: the road signs can't make up their minds and give you both. Why Cold? No doubt a reference to Cotswold winters up here at 700ft above sea level.

The church at Cold Aston, like the one in neighbouring Notgrove, has no east window, which makes one wonder why. Before you leave St Andrew's, take the time to find the grave of the Rev James Hughes, vicar of three churches for 27 years, and proud owner of no fewer than 27 cats. Two stand watch over his tombstone.

Go west from the village for a mile. Beyond the last house, divert left into Long Ash Piece, a splendid brake of trees in a double avenue, forming a half-mile-long wind

barrier on the skyline from north and south. And they are mostly beeched, another typical Cotswold feature.

Turn right and left at the end and cross the field obliquely follow bridleway signs, not footpath signs, throughout this walk with a lovely view of Notgrove village across the small valley.

At the lane, turn left and follow round to the church of St Bartholomew. Visiting Notgrove, an estate village, gives the feeling of trespassing in somebody's front garden. The church, standing next to the manor-house, is a small gem. Its guides notes call it a "church of precious things" to which the 20th century has contributed. In place of the missing east window is a large tapestry of the village, created over a period of 11 years by the lord of the manor and villagers together.

Walk up the lane, past the drive to the manor and beyond the cricket pitch. At the junction, turn left and almost immediately right into a lane heading westwards.

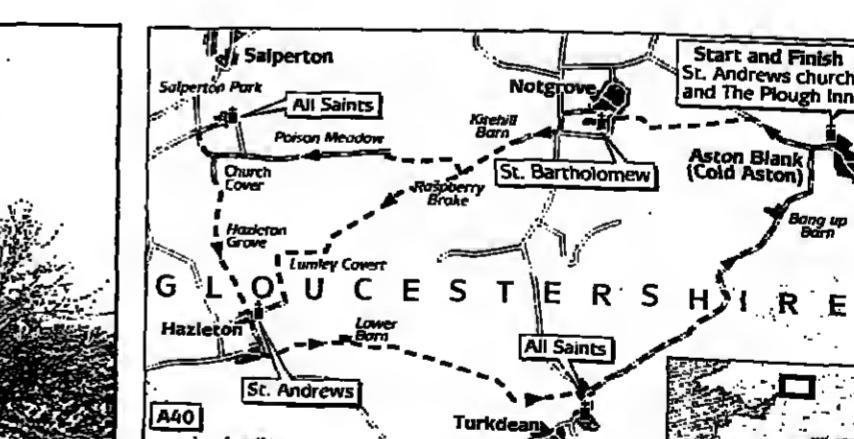
The view across the dry valley is one of large open fields, scattered barns, clumps of woodland (coverts and brakes) and distant views to the next village on the skyline, an experience that is repeated throughout the walk.

History is often perpetuated in these field and covert names. Farmers and landowners now dead and gone have their names recorded (Rixton's Covert) or their family remembered (Judith Grove).

Past Kitehill Barn, follow the path down into the valley bottom. Here there is the option of an additional route to take in Salperton - in



Attractive stone churches dot the Cotswolds landscape



some rare unimproved grassland on the steep field banks opposite Lumley Covert. At the road to the new farmhouse built up the bank, follow round to the left and up the track to enter Hazleton village, and visit St Andrew's church.

The route continues down the lane into the dip. Ignore two turns right and take the left turn, keeping straight on beyond the "unsuitable for motors" sign. Here begins another gentle drop into another valley, the road down to the farm buildings at Lower Barn becoming a stony track into the bottom.

Through the gate, turn right and enjoy for perhaps half a mile the best Cotswold valley of the walk - known locally as the "hidden valley". Up the bank to the gate and thence up to join the road at Manor Farm buildings at Turkestan.

Drop down to the field edge and then down the bank into another dry valley. Turn right here, enjoying

Read the report bravely posted up by an earlier warden on the obliteration of some of the church's wall paintings in a previous regime.

Retrace your steps back up the village, and at the manor on the corner of the small green turn right into another "unsuitable" bridleway for a superb mile-long walk across the fields back to Cold Aston.

On the way, have a smile at Bang Up Barn, once an isolated field barn and cottage. The barn has gone but the rebuilt cottage is now much more sophisticated and offers B&B. At the road once again, turn right into the village.

The walk is about eight miles; add two for the Salperton loop. Cold Aston is one mile off the A429. Park in the village, which has the only pub on the walk, the Plough Inn. Use OS Pathfinder maps 1067 & 1090 and Outdoor Leisure 45: Cotswolds.

Islanders who sing with one voice

Maybe it's because they have nothing else to do, but the Faroese are the world's greatest musical magpies. By Cleo Paskal

Sigrid bounds on-stage with messianic glee. She has that sleek-to-the-point-of-underlined, gazelle look common to a generation of post-Celine chanteuses. She briefly basks in the adulation wafting up from the crowd. Then, gesturing towards the choir of 30 or so singers already tiered at the back of the stage, she proudly proclaims: "United Voices is in the House!"

And the crowd goes wild. Woodstock revisited? Well, er, no. A Faroese church choir.

If there's one thing the Faroese take more seriously than football, it's music. Give 'em half a chance and they'll start to croon. Give 'em a whole chance and a guitar will appear out of nowhere. There are church choirs, school choirs, men's choirs, town choirs, countless bands and even a full orchestra. All in a country of fewer than 44,000 people.

Some say it is because the main cultural anchor of the Faroese is the Ring Dance, a mesmerising circle dance that dates from the Middle Ages. The dance can last for days and is accompanied by a cappella ballads that spin tales of ancient battles and love.

Once upon a time, much of western Europe danced the Ring Dance, but now the only place where the ghosts of the ballads come back to life is this tiny, windswept outpost in the North Atlantic.

Or maybe they sing so much because there's really not much else to do out here.

Whatever the reason, the Faroese sing their hearts out - in any style imaginable, and in every nook and cranny of their absurdly remote islands. They'll sing rock in beer clubs, blues in church, heavy metal in sports halls and just about anything at private parties.

The big annual showcase of home-spawned talent is the Faroe Islands' Jazz, Folk and Blues Festival. All the main currents of Faroese youth culture are represented.

The big excitement this year revolved around United Voices. You see, the Faroese also take their religion very seriously (they have a lot of spare time). Around 25 per cent of the population belongs to one of

the endlessly schisming fundamentalist Christian sects. And this year, some of the youth representing choirs from differing sects put their religious differences aside to form United Voices. This union was additionally blessed by getting Sigrid, a veritable Faroese mega-star - by virtue of being in a Norwegian girl band - to front it.

A capacity crowd turned out to see the group's inaugural show, an upbeat "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" spectacular. Sigrid's sultry dress alone put the put the "Yah!" back in "Hallelujah" and played its part in converting at least half of the audience. Think of the blonde girl from Abba doing gospel.

United Voices' last "Let Us Magnify Him, For He's Holy, Holy" had barely faded away when they were replaced on stage by what is unquestionably the best goth-rap-metal-funk band the Faroes ever produced (if only by lack of competition). MC Har is made up of the Bad Boys of Faroese popular music. Both of them. They are surrounded by an anarchic collective of surprisingly talented musicians and singers that will do things such as play a beautiful trumpet solo in the midst of a thumping oboe to sperm.

Ah, you today.

That Faroese knack of taking a standard form of music, from gospel to metal, and tweaking it just so to give it that special North Atlantic feel was superbly demonstrated on the last day of the festival by a local boy, Teitur Lassen.

Teitur, in his early twenties, had made a David Cassidy-esque name for himself as a Faroese teen heart-throb, performing in a rock band called Mark No Limits.

Then he went off to Denmark, and strange things happen there. He re-emerged at the Festival as a mature, smoky-voiced jazz singer, conjuring up ghosts of Duke Ellington and Harlem and Satchmo. But, being Faroese, he found that that wasn't enough. He had to give it that something extra. So he did a show where he set the words of classic Faroese poems to New York jazz riffs. And it was great.

It may be the Ring Dance, it may be the lack of good television, it may be the endless rounds of multi-

generational house parties, it may even be all the time they spend rearing sheep.

Whatever it is, it has produced a small corner of the world where people have the time and the skill to mix and meld the whole gamut of Western musical tradition, from medieval chants to Metallica. The Faroese can make gospel sexy, metal melodic and jazz even more poetic. And that's just this year's concoction.

Musical innovation is alive and well and living in the Faroe Islands. Who would have thought it?

It is pretty hard to avoid live music in the Faroe Islands. Organised events such as the Festival usually take place in the summer and autumn. This autumn, Frandur, one of the best-known bands in the Faroes, are to perform the country's first rock opera with the Faroese Symphony Orchestra.

If you can't wait until then, Mark No Limits and another popular Faroese rock band, KØLAR, both have CDs out. MC Har not only have a CD; they have also set up their own website at www.qza.dk.

— David

THE SUMMER OF 69, HOME COUNTIES STYLE

Britpop Mk1 by giving the run of royal park to the Rolling Stones.

The Stones' Hyde Park gig took place on 5 July, the weekend after one of the first premature deaths of a rock great - their former guitarist, Brian Jones. Mick Jagger quoted Shelley and released thousands of white butterflies in his memory. Then the windows of Apsley House and the Hilton rattled to the band's new hit, "Honky Tonk Woman". Jones died from the lethal rock combo of drink, drugs and diving into a swimming-pool at his East Sussex farm. Had he lived, he would have needed only to stride down the lane to the summer's next big event, at Plumpton racecourse.

In 1999, the children of those dazed hippies in the audience can set the controls for the heart of the Home Counties and retrace the trail of joss sticks and inadequate latrines of that glorious July and August.

Harold Wilson's Labour government assiduously courted the newly enfranchised youth vote. After showering the Beatles

with MBEs and starting up Radio 1, the government celebrated

hints that its clientele was not to

the taste of other Home Counties communities: "Previously at Windsor and Sunbury", it reads.

Because trains brought the festival-goers straight to the course, few of them ventured a mile or two south to the village of Plumpton, at the foot of the South Downs. They could have visited the Saxon church, then continued to the beautiful old county town of Lewes.

Most opted instead for the daytime vision of Ditchling Beacon rising above the haze of marijuana smoke ("Rolling tobacco and skins will be available in the Village area"), and the night-time spectacle of Keith Emerson destroying his Hammond organ during a particularly vigorous version of "America". At a time when half a million people were making their way to Yasgur's Farm in upstate New York for Woodstock, 15,000

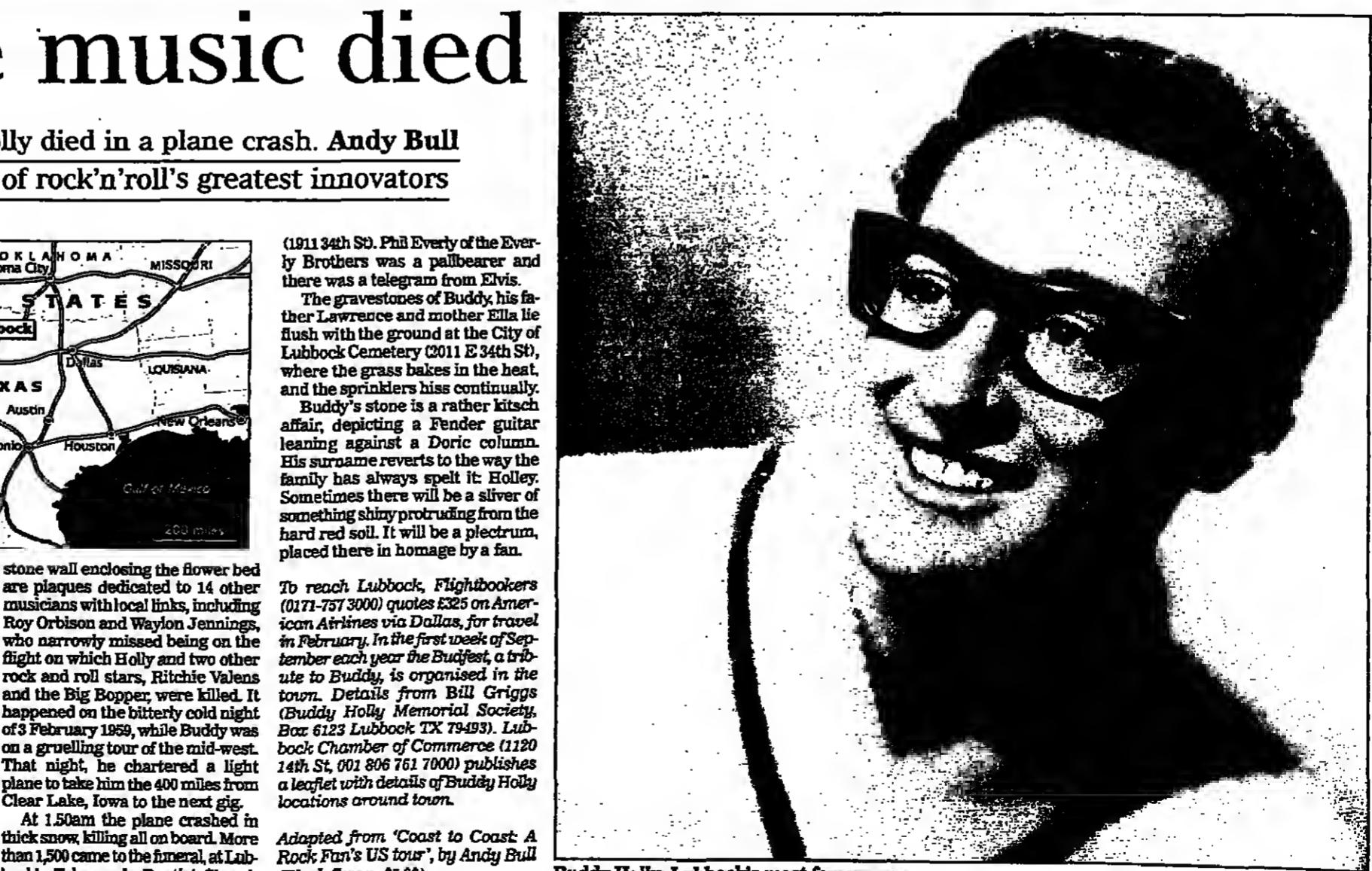
festival-goers in Britain were being urged that "provision of dishwashing facilities is difficult and expensive, so bring your own cutlery and get sixpence off the price of your meal".

The summer was sealed on

the last weekend of August. When the people of Freshwater Bay learned of plans for the Wight Festival of Music, they probably envisaged a genteel affair like the one that begins next Friday, the Cheltenham Folk Festival. After all, that nice Bob Dylan who wrote "Blowin' in the Wind" was booked to be there.

But the times they were a-changin': Bob bobbed up with The Band, and hewed away much of the western half of the Isle of Wight - or Isle of Delight, as Warner Bros called it. The mantle of rock had passed from Woodstock to Wight. Southern England would never be quite the same again.

SIMON CALDER



Something in the air: is it the sheer beauty of the place, or the lack of good television that makes the Faroese want to sing?

Corbis

The day the music died

Forty years ago this week Buddy Holly died in a plane crash. Andy Bull visits the Texan home town of one of rock'n'roll's greatest innovators



landscaped park, is also popular with fans, who pose for photos beside the sign (N University Ave).

The house where Holly lived in 1957 when "That'll Be the Day" was a hit still stands at 1305 37th Street. His alma mater, JT Hutchinson Junior High School (3102 Canyon Avenue), has a display of mementoes of him. To the north of town, just off Avenue A at 10th Street, and beyond the cattle market, is the Fair Park Coliseum, where Buddy Holly and the Crickets were at the bottom of hills headed by Elvis Presley and Bill Haley and the Comets. On the same side of town, the Buddy Holly Recreation Area, a

stone wall enclosing the flower bed are plaques dedicated to 14 other musicians with links, including Roy Orbison and Waylon Jennings, who narrowly missed being on the flight on which Holly and two other rock and roll stars, Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper, were killed. It happened on the bitterly cold night of 3 February 1959, while Buddy was on a gruelling tour of the mid-west.

That night, he chartered a light plane to take him the 400 miles from Clear Lake, Iowa, to the next gig. "Buddy Holly," the inscription reads, "contributed to the musical heritage of not only West Texas, but the entire world." Around the

(1911 34th St). Phil Everly of the Everly Brothers was a pallbearer and there was a telegram from Elvis.

The gravestones of Buddy, his father Lawrence and mother Ella lie flush with the ground at the City of Lubbock Cemetery (2011 E 34th St), where the grass bakes in the heat, and the sprinklers hiss continually. Buddy's stone is a rather kitsch affair, depicting a Fender guitar leaning against a Doric column. His surname reverts to the way the family has always spelt it: Holly. Sometimes there will be a sliver of something shiny protruding from the hard red soil. It will be a plectrum, placed there in homage by a fan.

To reach Lubbock, Flightbooks (0171-757 3000) quotes £325 on American Airlines via Dallas, for travel in February. In the first week of September each year the Buffet, a tribute to Buddy, is organised in the town. Details from Bill Griggs (Buddy Holly Memorial Society, Box 6123 Lubbock TX 79493). Lubbock Chamber of Commerce (1120 14th St, 001 866 761 7000) publishes a leaflet with details of Buddy Holly locations around town.

Adapted from "Coast to Coast: A Rock Fan's US tour", by Andy Bull (Black Swan, £5.99)



Buddy Holly: Lubbock's most famous son

Redfern

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

COMPILED BY CHRISTOPHER HAWTREE

STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD THAT DIDN'T MAKE THE HEADLINES

PARK AND RIDE

Australia: And you're certain that the fridge will work at the end of the year? The meltdown has begun in Melbourne. A two-hour Metcard travel ticket can, in fact, last several weeks, and somebody bought a \$2.20 ticket which expires on 6 Feb 2006.

OVER-REACTIONS

Singapore: Tay Seng has been fined \$1,000 for refusing to let pregnant Ting Sim out of his taxi after she vomited on the floor. She had then called her husband for help. When the couple were reunited on the pavement, they narrowly escaped Seng's reversing into them at speed, for which he was fined a further \$2,000 and banned from driving for six months. The taxi firm will no longer require his services. His defence claimed that it was all a misunderstanding: he was being gallant, and had not wanted Ting to walk through the vomit.

Egypt: A 24-year-old woman is in hospital after swallowing insecticide in protest against her mother's forbidding her to wear jeans.

Singapore: Although Soon Chew Fah was sleeping apart from her husband Chua Lian Seng, she was still annoyed to wake at one in the morning and find him naked behind the sitting-room sofa with their maid Suratin, whom she slapped. Suratin ran to her bedroom while Soon rang her sister and then her husband's grandmother to tell them of this outrage. While doing so, she saw Suratin open the kitchen window, but her shout of not to do anything silly was too late - the maid jumped to her death. It turns out that she and Chua had not had time to get much further than a massage.

REGNUM OCCUPARE

Finland: It is in better taste than dead Elvis at Wembley. Jukka Ammondt, a professor at the University of Jyväskylä, has already recorded two albums of the King's songs in Latin, and is now going for the big tune: a single of "Blue Suede Shoes" ("Esir Ku Za-gin") in ancient Sumerian, the cuneiform language of Babylonia which died out in 2,000 BC. An album will follow in the autumn. Professor Ammondt is certain that Elvis would have relished



Undie cover: Japanese police display £174,000-worth of women's lingerie, all stolen by one man from boutiques in the city of Nagoya. Police called the thief a 'maniac' AP

the idea. "The ancient Sumerians had big parties and drums and rattles, and the roots of rock may go back to man's earliest efforts to get a grip on life." One can only wonder how civilisation would have turned out if the Babylonians had been exposed to "Wooden Heart".

Rome: Best-itude: the Pope is to release a CD and video in March to meet the Easter market. Abba Pater is not another tribute to the creators of "S.O.S." and "Waterloo" but collection of his own compositions, prayers and chants in five languages, none of them Sumerian.

Florida: Victor Brancaccio was 16 when he stamped to death 81-year-old Mollie Frazier because she had

deplored his singing of Dr Dre's vulgar rap song "Stranded on Death Row". He later returned to spray-paint her body and burn it. Too young for Death Row himself, he is now appealing against a life-sentence; the anti-depressant Zoloft is held to blame, and the case is being funded by his parents, who have won some \$3m in the Florida state lottery.

MORSELS

Australia: In Victoria, Rocky Oppedisan, proprietor of Rocky's Bakeries, has been fined \$5,300 after selling a Vienna loaf to Kathleen Beecher, who said that the family had eaten some of it, been a little puzzled by the taste and thought that this was because they were not

used to it. Only later did they reach the mouse within. "I felt ill and my daughter went and threw up. I couldn't go near bread for weeks and I wouldn't eat another Vienna loaf if you paid me." Other flavours are off the menu now: inspectors have told Mr Oppedisan to purge his premises of ants and cockroaches.

China: Six miners at Dongliang have been saved after 27 days in a blocked mine, where they survived by eating their leather belts.

Australia: Somebody at the Cheesecake Shop in Modbury made a chocolate cake with marijuana among the ingredients and put it in the fridge for a colleague - but somebody else inadvertently sold it

to a mother for her son's 17th birthday party, where his 79-year-old grandmother was among the guests. She "felt a little bit silly. The cake was nice but whenever it was had spiced it up a bit. I went for a trip to the moon - I was completely out of it." Less stalwart guests required hospital treatment but an eight-month-old baby did not seem affected. As for the shop, its owner said, "The Cheesecake Shop prides itself on its quality-control system."

Hungary: A 71-year-old woman did not starve when she found herself locked in her pantry on 22 December. She lived for a month on tomato juice and canned fruit, by which time neighbours began to wonder where she was.

CUDDLY, GSOH

China: Ninety-nine-year-old Zhang Kehiao put an ad in a lonely-hearts column - "Any woman will do, but I hope that she understands the old saying, 'Half of woman is man'" - and said that he looks only 80. He has many offers, including several women in their twenties, and a 58-year-old woman flew to meet him forthwith.

IN THE BUFF

New York: Anybody who arrives at JFK and is pulled to one side by Customs is now offered a choice of a strip-search or an X-ray, which is not only thought less degrading for the

innocent but also reveals any drugs hidden within the body. Nobody - guilty or otherwise - has plumped for the X-ray.

North Dakota: A caller to a Burger King in Fargo convinced the manager that he was a police officer and gave a description of a 17-year-old female worker there. The manager then obeyed instructions to strip-search her for apparent theft. She was innocent, the call was a hoax and a real policeman, Lieutenant Scott Gilman, advises that "no manager of any business should decide it's necessary to strip-search any employee".

GONE TO GLORY

Michigan: Seven workers at the Independence Professional Fireworks factory at Osseo cannot be identified after an explosion.

COOPED UP

Los Angeles: Jai Thomas arrived with some friends for a \$3,000, three-week holiday in America and the Caribbean - but reckoned without his old religious-education teacher back home in Australia. Exuberant after some exams in 1991, Jai had cracked an egg on her head, for which ovate blessing he apologised. But she pressed charges of unlawful assault, and he was convicted and fined \$350. He became a computer-product specialist and put the egg crime on a US visa application three years ago, with no problem. Now, however, when visas are not required, he was held for 48 hours, during which time he was asked if he had ever taken drugs, suffered from TB or been in a psychiatric institution. "There's more to this than the egg incident," he was told.

UPDATE

California: Orange County Superior Court Judge Tam Schumann has issued a temporary injunction which requires Truong Tran to remove the Communist flag and poster of Ho Chi Minh which adorned his Hi-Tek video store in the Little Saigon district of Westminster. Protesters celebrated outside with a dragon dance, but Tran, one of the boat people, is unfazed. He says he is not a Communist but that Vietnam has changed and he wants trade with the country to be regular. The case continues.

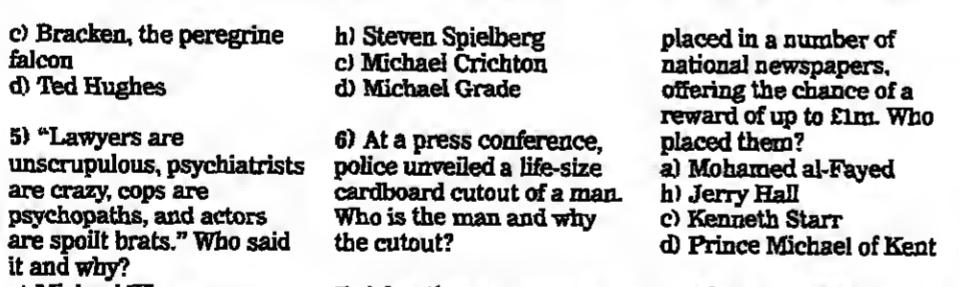
THE NEWS QUIZ



Flying high: Best, Gallagher, Reed or Moore? (See Q1)



Hard times: Queen Mum, the Escort, King Hussein or Montgomery? (See Q3)



c) Bracken, the peregrine falcon d) Ted Hughes

5) "Lawyers are unscrupulous, psychiatrists are crazy, cops are psychopaths, and actors are spoilt brats." Who said it and why?

a) Michael Winner

6) At a press conference, police unveiled a life-size cardboard cutout of a man. Who is the man and why?

b) Mohamed al-Fayed

c) Jerry Hall

d) Kenneth Starr

e) Prince Michael of Kent

7) Advertisements were

placed in a number of national newspapers, offering the chance of a reward of up to £1m. Who placed them?

a) Mohamed al-Fayed

b) Kenneth Starr

c) Prince Michael of Kent

d) Michael Winner

8) Who will benefit from a

package of "family friendly" measures announced on Thursday as part of the Fairness at Work Legislation?

a) Nurses

b) Mothers

c) Single mothers

d) Dentists

9) One hundred teenage girls at a North London convent school are being taught about unwanted pregnancies in a rather unusual way. What is it?

10) A former member of the Cabinet has just put their home up for sale. Who is it?

a) Charlie Whelan

b) Geoffrey Robinson

c) Peter Mandelson

d) Margaret Thatcher

11) Who have become prisoners in their own homes?

12) Which hard drug could end up being the soft option?

ANSWERS

1) "It would have been more of a shock if he had been sober." So said a member of airport staff after a man was arrested at Heathrow for being drunk and incapable. About whom did he say it?

a) George Best

b) Liam Gallagher

c) Oliver Reed

d) Dudley Moore

2) Two electronics manufacturers went to the High Court hoping to prove that each others' inventions sucked. Who were they?

a) The Queen Mother

b) The Ford Escort

c) King Hussein of Jordan

d) David Montgomery

3) It has been a bad week for the following. Why?

a) The Queen Mother

b) The Ford Escort

c) King Hussein of Jordan

d) David Montgomery

4) It has been a good week for the following. Why?

a) President Chirac

b) Boris, the Siberian eagle owl

c) Oliver Reed

d) Dudley Moore

5) It has been a bad week for the following. Why?

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b) Michael Crichton

c) Michael Grade

d) Michael Winner

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a) Flying

b) Swimming

c) Flying

d) Flying

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Who is it?

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d) Margaret Thatcher

11) Who have become

INES

MODERN MANNERS: YOUR CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE MINEFIELD

Dear Serena

Dear Serena,
At a communal meal, should one wait until everyone has been served before one starts eating? I think yes, my fiance says no. Who is right?

Kirstie, Leeds

going so far as importing a p'c'lergyman for the purpose. You'll look mighty fine spluttering a T.R. Deum round a mouthful of Brus'sels sprouts, won't you?

Dear Serena,
Good manners are always supposed to dictate that the moment a plate lands in front of you, you should get your snout straight into the trough like a Tory minister. If you start chowing while your hostess is still slaving over a hot-pot, some individuals will think you're frightfully frightful. Others, however, will think you're frightfully frightful; you wouldn't start eating before the Queen, would you? At least wait until your hostess has said encouraging words before you pick up your eating iron.

Also, don't be over-enthusiastic about shovelling up the pheasant in very grand houses. Certain elements among the toffs who always delight in epating the houzeos seem lately to have taken to saying grace at the beginning of meals, sometimes ever.

Why not? It could make an interesting story to tell the godchildren.

Dear Serena,
I recently found out that I had been

passed over for a job when the current incumbent started doing it. No one had told me. Is it normal these days not to bother to inform job candidates that they have failed?

Renee, Battersea

It's not normal, but it seems, sadly, to have become common practice these days among a certain type of employer to eschew courtesy to staff members. You are obviously working for one of these. I wouldn't bother saying anything, if I were you. Instead, start tunnelling your woy out. When you get a new job, hand your resignation to

personnel rather than your colleagues. They will, as is the way with personnel departments, fail to communicate the information to the relevant people. You can then derive considerable personal satisfaction from the fact that the first time these ill-mannered employers find out about you leaving is the day you don't turn up for work.

Dear Serena,
I don't seem to have the staying power I had when I was a lad, and worry that I can't satisfy my partner like I used to. I was thinking about trying Viagra. Would you recommend it?

Roger, Marlowe

If you're not put off by potential heart attacks or

crushing headaches, there's no harm in giving it a go, I suppose, though staying power is one of those things whose value has been greatly exaggerated by the pornography industry. Technique has always been more valued by those in the know. But for heaven's sake, check that your partner has the time and inclination before you go popping anything; there are few aphrodisiacs more effective than being expected to drop the laundry/ the baby/ one's nether garments when confronted with warning with a grinning sap proudly totting a chemical stink that won't go away.

Dear Serena,
How long should a widower wait to appear in public with a new partner?

C. Gloucestershire

Probably until the new partner has had enough hair-dying, facial treatments and styling advice to compete with the previous wife. Then again, there is only so much one can do: as my granny used to say, you can't make a Dresden shepherdess out of an old leather boot.

Knotty problems with the world today?
Write to Dear Serena, *The Independent*, 18th Floor, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL, where they will be treated with customary sympathy



ARIES

YOU MAY confidently expect to be more than popular this week (mmm, much more), but the respectable among you won't be pleased about the fact Mars is cosying nicely up to Venus but the star sign Neptune is spinning strange desires out of your subconscious. Either repress them and become neurotic, or act them out and have your phone number chalked up on toilet walls. Some aptitude for deceit may just help you through.



TAURUS

YOU WERE doing so well in love, you thought it would last for ever. It was even getting spiritual there among the tumbled sheets. Passion isn't finished; it is to go on all week, but then you overshoot and collapse. Perhaps your lover leaves exhausted; perhaps you are overwhelmed with disgust when someone turns the lights on. Maybe you have confused sexual passion with your financial ambitions. That's generally fatal. Good night.



GEMINI

WHAT A week, with powerful aspects stirring your pot this way and that. Pluto reveals to you the mysterious depths - now at last you understand why things are like this. Then an important conjunction with Uranus confers genius upon you - you are brilliant, you are in touch with the universal mind, you are practically telepathic. And, finally, you are given the creative power and stamina to act it all out. So now what's your excuse for it all going wrong?



CANCER

YOU SUFFER from a plangent melancholy. There is a memory of lost love, and time passing. You hear the laughter in the next room, and it is unbearable. It is easy to be depressed by those confident voices at the next table, people who have proper friends, and more than they need. You seem to be up to your elbows in the sink, with cads taking advantage of you from behind. Well, it is attention, after all. The answer isn't to lose weight.



POPPI FOLLY

YOUR STARS: IT COULD HAPPEN

It this is the dawning of the age of Aquarius, it's taking an awfully long time - can't we sit down? They're exhausting, Aquarians, especially when you marry them. They're always searching for the new. They're society's random mutation, and, like the majority of all mutations, an error.

But it's only after all the fireworks have gone out that you discover how disappointing the sign is. They are keen to tell you that it's the sign of genius, starting originally, explosive contributions to human knowledge. And yet look at what you in fact get: Olaf Palme, John Lydon, Elaine Stritch and half the Stones Brothers (Tom).

You want a novelist? You get Norman Mailer. You want an actor? You get Clark Gable. You want a queen? You get Beatrix of the Netherlands. You want a butch American expat writer? You get Gertrude Stein.

In truth the sign is divided between a) has-beens, b)

those who never will be and c) those who never really were (see above rule Val Doonican and Prunella Gee). But the has-beens make the most impressive list: Telly Savalas, Denis Norden and Frank Muir, Ned Sherrin, Jimmy Tarbuck, Oliver Reed, Roberta Flack, Robert Wagner, George Miles, John McEnroe, Janet Suzman, Anthony Howard, Nyree Dawn Porter, Libby Purves, Bamber Gascoigne, Tony Blackburn, John Profumo (you'd need something the size of the Vietnam vets monument to do this particular list justice).

Aquarians are rotters, essentially. Their cardinal virtues are entirely out of whack - they have too much faith, far too much hope and no charity at all.

But suitably enough, for a sign ruled by Uranus, we find such gay icons as Tallulah Bankhead, Morgan Fairchild, Franklin D Roosevelt, and Boris Spassky, as well as the famous perverts Havelock Ellis and James Watt (who had to invent the steam engine in order to power his latest mail-ordered device).



SAGITTARIUS

AS YOUR ruling planet is in semi-square to Uranus, this is the week you have half a chance of losing your fortune, your family, your reputation and anything else you value. You just get going and suddenly you get bored, or you fall over, or someone with a sweater profile catches your eye and you abruptly change direction. You are always in danger of buying high and selling low. Now the danger is buying high and giving it all to charity.



CAPRICORN

AT LAST you come into standing water; the tide must be turning. You can stay in the same place just by holding your breath. This is where habit lets you down; now is the time when you could make progress. You have energy stored, if only you could access it, but you feel you are caught in a web of your own spinning. You might console yourself with the thought that you are the spider; and there are still some flies out there, despite the cold.



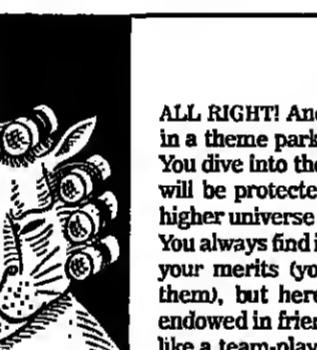
AQUARIUS

YOU'RE OFF in the higher realms, beyond the frontiers of visible science, below the horizon of the known world. Your will is attuned to your intellect, and you are pursuing a goal beyond the understanding of your friends (who think you're bats, by the way). A faulty aspect with Jupiter means you may in fact just be a crank (there is no way for you to tell the difference, but it will be quite obvious to us). *C'est magnifique, mais ne pas la vie.*



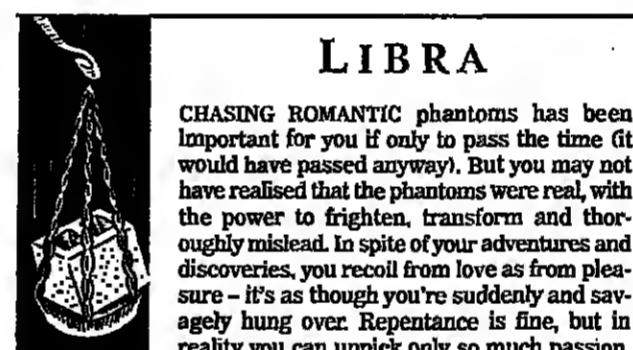
PISCES

ALL RIGHT, so there are impulses coming up from deep down, from the darkness where it all began, but don't look on the results as sexual deviation (just because your partner does). Look on it as therapy to fulfil childhood longings (don't tell your partner what you're doing). If you abandon yourself to your astrology you will drink deep of alcohol, drug abuse and sexual excess. But Mercury helps you to explain it all away later.



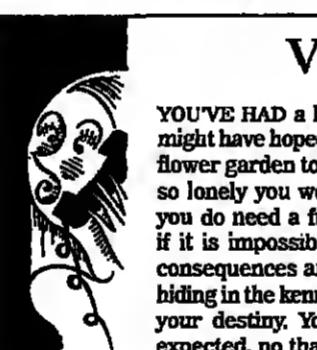
LEO

ALRIGHT! And there you go; it's like a ride in a theme park that only teenagers dare try. You dive into the unknown, confident that you will be protected by the benign forces of the higher universe (this may be over-confidence). You always find it difficult to be objective about your merits (you tend not to underestimate them), but here you are marvellously well-endowed in friendship, in work. You're almost like a team-player (people like that).



LIBRA

CHASING ROMANTIC phantoms has been important for you if only to pass the time (it would have passed anyway). But you may not have realised that the phantoms were real, with the power to frighten, transform and thoroughly mislead. In spite of your adventures and discoveries, you recoil from love as from pleasure - it's as though you're suddenly and savagely hung over. Repentance is fine, but in reality you can unpick only so much passion.



VIRGO

YOU'VE HAD a less successful time than you might have hoped recently, but don't dig up your flower garden to plant potatoes. If you weren't so lonely you wouldn't achieve anything. But you do need a fundamental connection, even if it is impossible to maintain. Just because consequences are disastrous is no excuse for hiding in the kennel of yourself. Get out and face your destiny. You're holding up better than expected, no thanks to anyone.



SCORPIO

STAND BACK, everyone - the drains are blocked and the waste-disposal is working in reverse. Dark secrets are out; suppressed appetites are raging again; strange desires let loose and they're running round your head like leopards in an empty swimming-pool. Fortunately for us you are more than usually deceitful, and Mercury will help you - but can the few who are close to you persuade you that they're trustworthy enough to live with your secrets?



GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

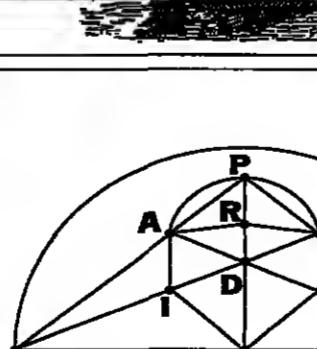
LARRY ADLER, 84, MOUTH ORGANIST

ITOOK a lady to see *Show Boat* last night, which reminds me of a joke. It's about Mrs Oscar Hammerstein talking to a lady at a party, and the lady says, "Look who just came in. It's Jerome Kern who wrote 'Old Man River'!" and Mrs Hammerstein said, "Jerome Kern did NOT write 'Old Man River', my husband wrote 'Old Man River'. What Jerome Kern wrote was 'dah, dah, dah-dah'..."

As a kid, I remember spending a day playing with some marbles in the street, but another kid came along and took my marbles. Then a big boy came up and said, "What are you crying about kid?" When I told him, he took the other boy by the feet and held him upside down until the marbles dropped out of his pocket, then he invited me to join his gang. Next month I'll be back in my home town of Baltimore, where I have the distinction of being the only student ever expelled from the Peabody Conservatory of Music. The students were supposed to take part in a recital, and I'd prepared a waltz by Grieg. But when I came up on stage, the superintendent said: "And what are we going to play, my little man?" So little man went to the piano and played "Yes, We Have No Bananas".

Larry Adler plays the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London SE1, on 12 February. His latest album 'The Genius of Larry Adler' (Decca) is released on Monday

PANDORA MELLY



Phonics, Phonics, Phonics) add the new mantra: Literacy Numeracy Musicality Not quite in alphorder perhaps, but, it can at least spell its own initials, unlike the SFRs. Oh and *Puzzle Panel's* back, though I had wondered if all the strands would come together in

time. I'd set aside January to tackle a backlog of paperwork and to immerse my asthmatic lungs in breathable air in the Alps or Palm Desert. But a frantic call from the Harley Street doctor was found who - between my script meeting and tea with the panelists - injected me with depomedrone. It didn't

stop the pain, but at least I didn't wheeze, or croak. From then on all went smoothly. It was, of course, a dream team: David Singmaster, William Hartston and Val Gilbert. But also it was a return to the magical, manageable, mythical world of puzzles.

Solutions to last week's puzzle:

1. A 3x3 magic square can only be constructed in integers if its magic number is a multiple of 3.
2. BOG ASPHODEL
3. NeuroN,
- INDOEUROPEAN. Brian Glyde suggests PLEuroNG. Apparently it's a somite (sic), especially in an insect's thorax.

Points to Ponder:

1. You leave home for the dome (see picture, left) traversing each part of the network exactly once. Where's the dome?
2. How many states do 65 sets of traffic lights have?

Comments to indy@puzzlemaster.co.uk

'Puzzle Panel': R4, Fridays at 1:30pm

have been with him on that job, because he was my hero.

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PANDORA MELLY

ITV/Regions

RADIO 1 (97.6-99.8kHz FM)
7.00 Mark Goodier **10.00** Chris Moyles **1.00** Lisa Lanson **3.00** Radio 1's R'n'B Chart **5.00** Judge Jules **7.00** Lovegroove Dance Party with Roger Sanchez **9.00** Westwood - Radio 1 Rap Show **12.00** Radio 1 Reggae Dancehall Nite **2.00** Essential Mix: Cassius **4.00** - **6.30** Annie Nightingale.

RADIO 2 (88.9-92.1MHz FM)
6.00 Mo Dutta **8.05** Brian Matthew **10.00** Steve Wright's Saturday Show **1.00** The Smith Lectures **1.30** The Newly Discovered Casebook of Sherlock Holmes **2.00** Alan Freeman **3.30** Johnnie Walker **5.30** Paul Gambaccini **7.00** The American Trilogy **8.00** Bonnie Raitt in Concert **9.00** Suzi Quatro: Rockin' with Suzi O **10.00** Bob Harris **1.00** Lynn Parsons **4.00** - **7.00** Mo Dutta.

RADIO 3 (90.2-94.7MHz FM)
6.00 On Air **9.00** CD Review, See Pick of the Day.

12.00 Private Passions **1.00** The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert. (R) **2.00** Best of 3 **3.00** Young Artists' Forum **4.00** Classic Masterclass **5.00** Jazz Record Requests **6.00** Jazz Century Russell Davies presents a 52-part history of jazz.

6.30 Opera on 3. Puccini's touching tale of the love of the beautiful but consumptive seamstress Mimi and the poet Rodolfo, set against the background of late 19th-century bohemian Paris, with the ambitious daydreams of its poverty-stricken artists, its lovers' quarrels, crowded cafe scenes and lonely garret rooms. This is one of the most heart-rending of all Puccini's operas, crowned by the death scene of Mimi. Sung in Italian by Cristina Gallardo. Domas, soprano (Mimi), Frank Lopardo, tenor (Rodolfo) and Ariane Arieta, soprano (Musetta). Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera, New York/Marco Armiliato. Acts 1 and 2.

YOUR MONEY

HOW TO MAKE IT • HOW TO SPEND IT



Do the PEP quickstep

They are being replaced in weeks, but personal equity plans can still make sense. By Tony Lyons

There are now just two months left in which to take out a personal equity plan. Time is running out before they are replaced in April by individual savings accounts.

But in view of the volatility of the stockmarket, if you haven't already invested in a PEP in the current financial year, should you do so now?

Certainly, if you are a taxpayer, especially if you pay higher rate tax, the answer is yes. Any financial adviser will tell you that PEPs are for long-term investors, those prepared to wait five years or longer before cashing in. Over almost all five-year periods since the end of the First World War, equities have outperformed all other forms of investment. The ability to shelter £5,000 in a general PEP and £3,000 in a single-company PEP, free of capital gains tax, and to receive back half the income taken in tax after 5 April, is very worthwhile.

It used to be that all PEPs were free of income tax, but the rule change in the last budget will halve the advanced corporation tax - the tax charged on company profits - that can be reclaimed to 10 per cent for five years. After this year, PEP managers will not be able to reclaim any of this income for you.

While this may make PEPs marginally less attractive, it still makes them an ideal home for long-term investment.

However, even taking a long-term view, should you be investing in equities with many analysts expecting share prices to fall? "Don't worry too much about timing," says Ann Davis of Fidelity. "Obviously it is better to buy when prices are low,



Don't miss the boat; there are only three months before PEPs are replaced by individual savings accounts

but leave the timing to the professionals, the fund managers."

"Never try to second-guess the market," advises Roddy Kohn, of Kuhn Cougar, independent financial advisers. "Just a couple of years ago, many were saying that the UK market was too high when the FTSE 100 was standing around the 3,400 level. We all know what happened since then."

At the moment, the short-term risks are higher than usual. So decide what type of investor you are. If you are prepared for a high risk, then you should not delay your purchase

of PEPs in the hope that prices will drift lower. You might as well plunge into equities now.

Already many of the leading groups are making tempting offers. M&G, for example, will give you as much as £200, while other groups, such as Mercury, will cut their initial charges by 2 per cent.

The Independent is offering readers a free "Guide to PEPs", sponsored by Scottish Widows Fund Management, with advice on the types of PEPs available, charges, and a list of leading PEP managers and numbers. Call 0345 678910 to get your free copy.

It is not the time to be splashing out on emerging market investments, even if they may show strong recovery later on. It is better to concentrate on the UK and Europe. The latter is one of the few sectors favoured by most advisers, getting a boost as it will from the recent introduction of the euro. To capitalise on this, Scottish Widows has just launched a new Euroland Trust that can be "Pepped". This will concentrate on the 11 members of the EU's monetary union "which has a population greater than the USA but [whose] stockmarkets are undercapitalised by comparison," says Jamie MacLeod, of Scottish Widows Fund Management. The group believes that equity investment will increase in appeal and that continental pension funds, with a much larger single, home market, will be investing more in shares than they used to. And

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to entice new investors, the initial charge has been reduced from 5 to 3 per cent during the introductory offer period.

If you are more risk averse and worried about where share prices are heading, then there are a number of protected funds available from groups such as Cignis and Barclays B2. One of the most popular is also from Scottish Widows. Called the SafetyPlus PEP, the underlying unit trust grew 41 per cent to £202m in the last quarter of 1998. While its price can be raised at any time, it can only be reduced once a year. When you buy, you know that during the coming year the minimum it will be worth is 95 per cent of your PEP investment.

For anyone needing income, or who wants to take minimal risks, corporate bonds should be considered. As they invest in government gilts and loan stock issued by the best British companies, the income generated remains tax free. Instead of taking the income, you can accumulate it within the PEP. But remember, as these are not equity investments, they are likely to show lower growth rates over the long term.

Don't forget that so long as you invest your PEP money before 5 April, you can always change the investment vehicle later on. While no new money will be allowed into PEPs after that date, transfers will still be allowed. This means that you can invest in a low-risk PEP now, if markets settle or you feel less nervous about them, change the underlying fund later on. Most transfers within the same management group are usually done free of charge or for minimal costs, although these may be higher if moving to a new management group.

BARGAIN HUNTER



Property of the week

Three for one

YOU GET two for the price of one with this property in Great Moulton, 12 miles from Diss, in Norfolk, an easy drive from the coast and the Broads. Barn Meadow and Carpenter's Cottage share six acres of formal and informal gardens, including an orchard and arboretum. In fact, it's almost three for the price of one, as Carpenter's was originally two cottages under a thatched roof (now pantiled). Both properties have been recently restored and extended. Offers around £225,000 to Strutt & Parker (01603 617431).

ROSALIND ROUSSELL

Car of the week

Grand offer

USED CAR sales are still going strong and some of the UK's biggest car supermarkets have mass-market cars that are now very cheap. Concept Car Supermarkets have branches in Cannock, Chertsey, Southampton, Manchester and Glasgow (0800 9807127). They are offering up to £1,000 off certain models. A selection of N-registered Ford Mondeo 1.8 LX automatics with a sticker price of £4,995 have now been reduced to a much more reasonable £3,995. Just as important, there are some attractive finance terms.

JAMES RUPPERT

Deal of the week

Performance for a price

PERPETUAL, ONE of the country's most respected fund managers, has launched its first pension contract. Its charges are on the high side. For every £100 put in, £5 comes off in an initial charge. The contract also charges £24 a year in admin fees and up to 1.5 per cent a year in fund management charges. It also offers the chance to take a payment holiday without penalty. If Perpetual can repeat the glittering returns of the past, and savers keep up the contract for decades, not years, the charges fade into insignificance. Available through independent financial advisers.

ANDREW VERITY

Pension giants fall out over quote manipulation claims

Are you being misled over your pension? Sun Life fears you might be. By Paul Slade

PERSONAL PENSION giants like Standard Life are manipulating their quotes to produce contracts which look good on paper but give many customers a poor deal.

That's the charge from AXA Sun Life, which accuses rivals of artificially boosting the transfer values they offer. These show the amount you would get if you stopped your premiums early and took the money in your pension to another company. But AXA Sun Life research shows that only about 15 per cent of people who stop their premiums early take this route. The other 85 per cent leave the fund where it is, turning their pension into what insurers call a paid-up policy (PUP).

Concentrating on transfer values alone therefore lets some companies sell pensions by pointing to high transfer values, knowing very few customers will ever take them up in practice. Companies named by AXA Sun Life as offenders include Standard Life, Scottish Amicable, Clerical Medical and Norwich Union.

AXA Sun Life business development manager (pensions) Steve Burgess says: "Some companies are cynically ma-

nipulating their figures so they look good on a standard quote."

But Standard Life pensions marketing manager Andrew Black denies the charge. He says: "In general terms, contracts offering good transfer values also offer good PUP maturity values. They're not identical, but there's a strong link."

The effect of switching from transfer values to PUP maturity values can be dramatic, however. If you take the example of a 25-year pension, with premiums of £200 a month, and look at which one produces the best transfer value after one year, Clerical Medical tops a list of 12 leading companies. Look

instead at which company produces the best PUP maturity value, and Clerical Medical drops to the very bottom of the table (see left).

Nigel Chambers, deputy managing director at IFA's Johnstone Douglas, warns that customers can have either high transfer values or high maturity values, but not both.

He says: "Insurers can collect their charges early and have as Sun Life has - a higher maturity value. Or they do as Standard Life does and take a level charge all the way through, which gives you lower maturity values. You can't do both."

Nearly 30 per cent of people with a regular premium personal pension stop their payments in the first four years. Whichever option you choose when stopping, you cannot take the pension's benefits until it matures at retirement age.

The regulators demand that pension companies quote both transfer value payout and full maturity values. These appear on the key features documents which all customers receive. PUP maturity values can be included, but there is no obligation.

AXA Sun Life plans to lobby for PUP maturity values also to be made compulsory. Burgess

says: "The only figures shown on the quote are the transfer value and the full maturity value. What they don't show is what happens if you stop after a given number of years."

Once again, Black does not agree. He claims customers would simply be confused if faced with three different figures: "Early transfer values and full maturity values illustrate the bulk of the story. They bring out what I think are the key messages. It's a question of balance, and of choosing the right amount of information."

Full maturity values assume you will continue premiums throughout the pension's term. PUP maturity values show what happens if you stop after a given number of years.

Chambers thinks the Government's plans to bring in new low-cost stakeholder pensions could lead to high early transfer values backfiring on companies offering them. AXA Sun Life has its own axe to grind in this particular row. The company's Lifestyle range of personal pensions, launched on 14 January, is built round providing high PUP maturity values.

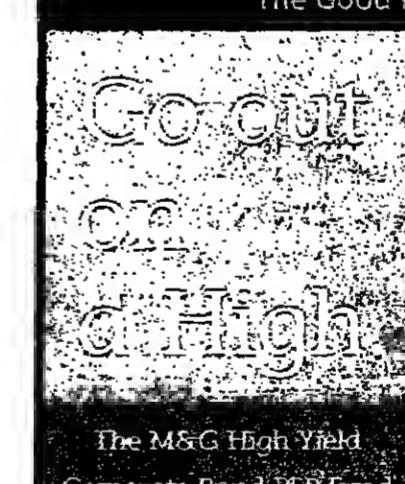
PENSION VALUES	
Ranking	Plan
Company	Plan transferred paid up
Clerical Medical	1 12
Scottish Mutual	2 11
Norwich Union	3 5
Friends Provident	4 8
CGU	5 4
Scottish Amicable	6 7
Scottish Equitable	7 10
Standard Life	8 6
Royal & Sun Alliance	9 5
Scottish Widows	10 3
Legal & General	11 2
Sun Life	12 1



The Sun Life Centre in Bristol - centre of a pensions storm

*Estimated gross distribution gross income reinvested and redemption yield 7.8% per annum as of 11.12.98. Estimated yields will vary up to date figures are available on request of the number below. **The dealing spread was 0.65% as of 11.12.98. The M&G High Yield Corporate Bond Fund is managed by M&G Securities Limited (regulated by the Personal Investment Authority and M&G M&G do not offer investment advice or make recommendations about the fund). We only provide a general overview of the services of the M&G management group. The charges for PEP and ISA's vary by charge and the value of the tax benefits will depend on the individual circumstances of the investor. Issued by M&G Financial Services Limited (regulated by the Personal Investment Authority), M&G House, Victoria Road, Chelmsford CM1 1FB.

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JASPER RIES

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A problem shared...

FINANCIAL MAKEOVER

NAMES: EDMUND AND JUDITH HUGHES **AGES:** 31 AND 34 **OCCUPATIONS:** RESEARCH ENGINEER AND SENIOR NURSE

Edmund and Judith live in Hampshire and married last year. They are both employed. Edmund as a university research engineer and Judith as senior nurse. Having got the savings for the wedding and new home out of the way, they now feel that they need to organise their personal finances.

They are particularly concerned about pension planning. Both of them are members of their employers' schemes; Judith has been in the National Health Service Pension Scheme since 1986 and Edmund joined the Universities Superannuation Scheme in December 1997. Their main worry is over Edmund's pension, as his current scheme is the only provision he has made.

The couple have some savings accounts scattered about, and each has a Tessa. They also have some shares; Judith has Halifax windfall shares, and Edmund holds some "blue chips". In addition to this, Judith has been paying into a low-cost endowment plan since 1989. They have a repayment mortgage, which is fixed for four years, and have taken out a joint level term life assurance to cover the loan. They save £400 per month to fund home improvements and holidays, and would like to continue this if possible.

The adviser
Fiona Price of Fiona Price & Partners, 33 Great Queen Street, Covent Garden, London WC2B 5AA. Telephone 0171-430 0366.

The advice
For a newly married couple, Edmund and Judith's finances are in surprisingly good order. However, here are a few areas which need to be addressed.

As always, the first thing to look at is short-term savings. They need to build up the amount they currently have and should aim for at least three months' normal expenditure to cover any emergencies. Their savings are spread over three accounts and the rates on the First Direct high interest savings and Nationwide monthly savings account are not very competitive.

They should transfer the money in these accounts to the Nationwide Invest Direct account, which is



Feeling the squeeze: Edmund and Judith Hughes

Russell Sacks

paying 5.9 per cent gross (or they could consider Prudential's egg savings account, with a gross interest rate of 7.25 per cent, currently the best rate available, provided they are happy to put up with egg's administration problems).

As for the Tessas, Edmund's is with the Bradford & Bingley and I think that he should leave it there. Judith might want to consider moving her Halifax Tessa to get a better rate, as long as there are no penalties involved.

Investments: I would advise Judith to keep her low-cost endowment as it has been going for nine years. It suits her cautious attitude to risk and

it would be advisable to surrender it, as it won't have made much, if any, profit. There could also be penalties on surrender.

Edmund should keep his shares, and I see little point in putting them into a PEP. It is a small shareholding and unlikely to give rise to a capital gains tax problem. And the income from PEPs will no longer be tax-efficient, due to the reduction in tax credits on dividends. The cost of the PEP may outweigh the advantages here.

Protection: Further, Edmund and Judith see protection as a low priority. Both of their employers provide good levels of sickness

benefit, so there is very little need for permanent health insurance (PHI) – especially for Judith. Their employers' schemes also have in-built death benefits which, together with the term assurance covering their mortgage, are more than adequate for their needs.

I would, however, suggest that they take out a critical illness plan, as extra protection for their home loan. This type of insurance pays out a lump sum in the event of contracting certain serious illnesses, and would give them some peace of mind if the unthinkable were to happen.

A suitable plan, covering both lives for a sum assured of £100,000, costs £35 to £40 a month. My calculations show that Judith should be able to fund the additional cost of her pension using her spare cash. But she should write to the NHS Pensions Agency, giving her national insurance number, to get a breakdown of the cost.

Pensions: Edmund and Judith have said that their main concern is pensions. Edmund works on a contract basis and is less certain than Judith of his future career path. His aim is to retire at 65 on the maximum pension. This would mean that if he stayed with the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) he would have a shortfall in his target pension, equivalent to £4,210 a year in today's terms. He can make up this shortfall by buying "added years" within the scheme, making additional voluntary contributions to his employer's AVC scheme, or taking out a free-standing AVC scheme.

Each one has its pros and cons. However, on balance an AVC scheme would probably be preferable to added years. Though a close run thing, on balance an AVC would suit Edmund's attitude to investment better in a favourable climate. The analysis I carried out showed that Edmund would have to pay £77 per month before tax relief, to achieve his objective.

Judith has been in the NHS Pensions Scheme since 1986. She originally joined the scheme in 1983, but was offered the opportunity by her employer to opt out after three years' service and take a return of contributions, which she decided to do. Though she later opted back in, it is a decision she now regrets.

She is anxious to make up the loss.

Added to this, she would like to retire at the age of 55. Fortunately,

as

she was a member of her scheme before 1995, this is her scheme retirement age.

It means that if she continues in service until the age of 55 she will have 34 years' service,

and, because it is also her "normal retirement age", she can fund for the maximum pension (which is based on 40 years' service). Judith, like Edmund, has the same top-up choices. After completing an analysis, I suggest that Judith buy added years. This will provide her with an inflation-proofed pension and is compatible with her very cautious attitude to risk.

My calculations show that Judith

should be able to fund the additional cost of her pension using her spare cash.

But she should write to the NHS Pensions Agency, giving her national insurance number, to get a breakdown of the cost.

Millions lost to the tax moguls

TAXPAYERS STRUGGLING
with tomorrow's deadline for tax payments might be comforted to know that someone, somewhere in the financial world, is standing up for the little guy. That champion of consumer rights, the Personal Investment Authority, has been flexing its muscles.

This week was Liverpool Victoria, fined a record £900,000 for serious and widespread failures to comply with the rules.

Two weeks ago, another regulator, Imra, fined Lloyds TSB £425,000 for persistent poor management of its unit trusts. A large part of the problem was down to its computer system.

Right though. But there are some quarters of the financial world which lurk out of reach of the regulatory machine. In this customer's hell, poor administration is widespread. Customers are frequently overcharged.

They are never paid interest when they're owed money. And they're often forced into overdraft. What's more, it's all done with impunity. The culprits' actions affect our finances more intimately than any unit trust company. And yet they are never fined. In fact, they are.

Which brings us back to the Inland Revenue. The sins of Lloyds TSB have been repeated, almost to the letter, by the Revenue.

Overcharging, to the tune of hundreds of millions of pounds, goes unnoticed and uncorrected every year. No interest is paid when they have incorrectly estimated your tax liability and take months to refund it, though officials will slap a surcharge plus interest on those of us who underestimate.

This week it emerged that the Revenue's bad admin had caused over 800,000 incorrect tax returns to be sent out. The returns were sent out as part of the

ANDREW VERTY

Overcharging by the Revenue is unnoticed and goes uncorrected every year

Revenue's "guarantee", a promise to calculate the tax of those who got their forms in by September 31. The calculations were supposed to be with taxpayers before the end of January.

Unfortunately, when they arrived, they appeared to charge customers double the amount they owed. An apology letter followed, but customers had to work out, according to an obscure formula, how much they really owed. So much for the guarantee.

Last year, the Inland Revenue's tax statements were even worse – they confused credits with debts and vice versa. Thousands owed refunds by the Revenue were fined for non-payment. Red faces in Somerset House all round, and public apologies – but no one was punished.

It is not as if this is confined to the Revenue. MPs this week slammed the dodgy technology installed at the DSS to administer national insurance. NIERS2 – the £100m computer system installed by Andersen Consulting, had failed on no less than 1,919 counts. Over 17 million contributions had not been processed. Payments to private pension schemes had been delayed for months – costing scheme members some £38m.

Compared to the private sector, the public part of the financial world runs wild. But a simple public reform would do the trick: interest and surcharges for delays, and a £100 fine for each cock-up.



GOOD BUY PEPS

Alas, soon it will be goodbye to PEPs. However, there's still time to invest up to £9,000 tax-free. Buy from Chelsea and get a really great deal. As well as the PEPs illustrated, we handle all the leading brands. All of which are discounted. So far we have given back over £12 million in discounts.

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When you invest in tomorrow, it's easy to become history...

Nasdaq may be the place to spot the next Microsoft, but it's wise to exercise some old-fashioned caution. By Guy Dennis

According to Maurice Saatchi, the guru of advertising, good adverts are like road signs. Road signs name a place, say how far away it is and point people in a specified direction. Likewise, good adverts, he points out, supply minimal information and people follow them.

By this definition, the recent adverts for Nasdaq, the new US stock market, may be good: they certainly supply a name and minimal information. They present Nasdaq as a hi-tech growth-base for investors' money, using examples of companies such as Microsoft.

However, as with any presentation supplying minimal information, they leave many questions unanswered, and many viewers mystified.

What is Nasdaq? How do you invest in it? Is doing so a good idea? Answers to these questions may not make for exciting ad breaks during *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*, but if you are attracted by Nasdaq's adverts and want solid investment performance, you should look for answers to these questions, rather than the ones read out by Chris Tarrant.

Named after America's NASDS - the National Association of Securities Dealers, which founded it in 1971 - Nasdaq is one of the most important stock exchanges in the world. It lists shares in over 5,500 companies - more than any other stock market.

"It's a stock exchange that's got a huge mixture of companies in it, ranging from mega technology stocks such as Intel, Microsoft and Cisco, to very small American companies," says Richard Royds, who is the managing director of Mercury unit trusts.

It also has some interesting characteristics. The Nasdaq market is not even in place. Trading takes place electronically between dealers all over the world, although it is facilitated by a mainframe computer in Connecticut.

Yet what really makes Nasdaq stand out are its technology companies - including those mentioned above - among which have been some of the most profitable busi-

nesses in the history of the world.

Mr Royds says: "It is not totally technological in any way, but it's got a tremendously high weighting of tech stocks." With the boom in technology it is easy to see why city investment specialists can get excited by Nasdaq.

However, not all of its companies are such glittering success stories. Greg Kerr, a fund manager on the US desk at M and G, says: "Certainly, at the low end of the market, you will get a lot of low-quality companies." While the financial rewards from investing in Nasdaq can be very high, so can the losses.

Still, with the prospect of dynamic hi-tech companies that may boom

company will not usually offer advice to clients on foreign shares.

Amanda Davidson, of the financial advisers Holden Meehan, says: "Private investors should not be encouraged to do this. They should look for a US fund - either a unit trust or an investment trust - and do it that way."

The pooled investments reduce risk by spreading investors' money across many companies, and can benefit from the expertise of a fund manager picking shares. However, although experts agree that private investors should, except in special circumstances, choose a collective investment, there is debate about the best type of fund.

may appeal. A more general American fund will invest in the US as a whole, but by doing so it is very likely to include Nasdaq shares.

The debate focuses on whether American funds or technology funds are likely to offer the best performance. Ms Davidson says: "As far as our clients are concerned, unless they've got piles of money we would generally recommend a spread US fund - not one specifically in hi-tech unless that's what really takes their interest specifically."

"A technology fund is going to be the higher risk. Hopefully that's going to pay off, but that is not always the case."

Mr Kerr warns: "Technology has had a spectacularly strong quarter, but that situation may not be going to last that long."

Yet although the risks may be higher, some experts are still enthusiastic about technology stocks. Mr Royds remarks: "I think that in the technology marketplace, with the speed of change in technology, the opportunities for clever investors are tremendous."

Whatever type of funds you are interested in, it is worth bearing in mind general guidelines for choosing collective investments.

Ms Davidson says: "Have a look and see what its past performance was like; see if the firm it is run by is generally doing well; bear in mind that, if a company only has one good fund, then if its manager leaves that will leave you exposed."

"And you can look at what a fund actually invests in if you want to go into that amount of detail." She advises any investor to consult an independent financial adviser if they have the money to start looking to invest abroad.

Nasdaq is not simply a thoroughbred stud farm for the Microsofts and Intels of the future. Tomorrow's front-runners may be in there somewhere, but finding them is a difficult task that is best left to the professionals.

And "you shouldn't try and gain exposure to Nasdaq for its own sake," warns Greg Kerr. There may be great opportunities waiting to be exploited - but, like Chris Tarrant's television quiz, Nasdaq is not a guaranteed fast track to becoming a millionaire.



The professionals know best AP



With the boom in technology, it's easy to see why Wall Street is so excited by Nasdaq Brian Harris

Today self-assessment, tomorrow the virtual world...

I TRUST you have filled in your self-assessment tax return and got it off to the Inland Revenue by now. If you haven't, then - oops! Friday was the last working day of the month, though you might get away with making sure the return is on the taxman's doormat first thing on Monday. If you are one of the large number of people who indulge in this kind of brinkmanship, what can I say? It is you £100 that the Revenue will take away as a fine for late delivery of the return.

For future reference, I direct your attention to the self-assessment website, which explains the dates on the tax

calendar, the records you need to keep and offers answers to common queries. There is also the obligatory screensaver: I am happy to say I do not know anybody who is sad enough to download a screensaver from the Inland Revenue.

It is easy to be confused about what the taxmen want from you. They get confused too. It is also easy to get confused about issues concerning the Internet. Take, for example, last week's launch by Barclays Stockbrokers of an expanded pilot of its trading service. This was translated by one newspaper (which shall remain nameless) - oh alright, it was the *Mail on Sunday* into

the news that Barclays Bank was planning to launch a free Internet access service - something which was news to both Barclays Stockbrokers and Barclays Bank themselves!

Finding your way round the Net also appears to be causing not a little confusion to some readers. One, trying to find Interactive Investor, one of the main personal finance sites, was bemused to find himself looking at Innovative Interfaces, an American specialist in website software for libraries. Why is there this confusion? It is a simple matter of making sure you

know your dot-coms from your dot-co-dot-uks.

On the subject of Interactive Investor, the site has launched a PEP Centre to help the bemused among us find their way round this last-ever PEP-buying season. The first thing you will see on the PEP Centre is a countdown of the number of days remaining to the end of the tax year - 63, as of today.

The PEP Centre is intended to be the first of a series of focused topic sites within the overall Interactive Investor website,

which are planned to be launched over the next few months. Similar sites covering other subjects such as

mortgages, healthcare products, personal pensions and banks are promised in the near future.

It offers a range of performance data, news and features. The statistics are provided by Standard & Poor's Micropal, one of the industry's leading number-crunchers. You may view shordists of PEP funds by performance, sector and geographical focus and review the top 10 performing funds over one, three, five and 10 years.

The site also includes links to

a list of PEP providers, offering a brochure request service, and

news sourced from the financial services' weekly Money

Marketing, as well as interactive

Investor's own in-house news. However, just a word to the wise; while this may be your "last chance" to buy a PEP, that does not make it necessarily the right investment choice for you. With only a couple of months left to run, there is not a lot of point in anyone taking out a monthly PEP saving scheme. Purchasing a PEP right now will really only make sense if you can devote a lump sum to the investment.

Self-assessment:

www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/sa/

Interactive Investor:

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Lenders have to face reality and start offering home loans at a decent cost to suit customers

Security is what we want



JONATHAN DAVIS

It is not the cost of a house, but the cost of the finance that should top the agenda

It may be just a straw in the wind, but with any luck this week's hint from Northern Rock that it is considering changing the way it funds its mortgage lending will prove to be an important (and overdue) watershed in the cost of owning a home in this country.

The building society (soon to come) to a bank says that it is looking at ways to fund its lending to home owners by issuing securities to investors, rather than relying on the traditional building society source, which is the deposit accounts of its savers. The technique of funding loans with securities backed by a lender's mortgage book is widespread in the United States, but has been slow to reach this country, despite many predictions that it was on the way.

The argument for switching to mortgage-backed securities as a source of finance is that it should enable lenders such as Northern Rock to borrow money for home loans more cheaply than they can raise money at the moment. This in turn will allow them to compete more effectively, either by taking market share from other lenders with more expensive sources of finance, or by increasing their profit margins on home loans.

The immediate trigger for Northern Rock's move, apart from its impending demutualisation, seems to be the entry of new competitors in the market for retail savings. Companies such as the Prudential with its EGG account, and Standard Life, are

offering higher rates on savings accounts than the banks or building societies reckon they can afford.

If this turns out to be the start of a trend, which is not unlikely, it can only be good news for borrowers. The sad truth is that, while we in Britain spend an inordinate amount of time fretting over which type of mortgage to have, and what is happening to house prices, we tend to lose sight of the fact that the real problem we face in a low inflation environment is how expensive and inflexible our mortgage finance is.

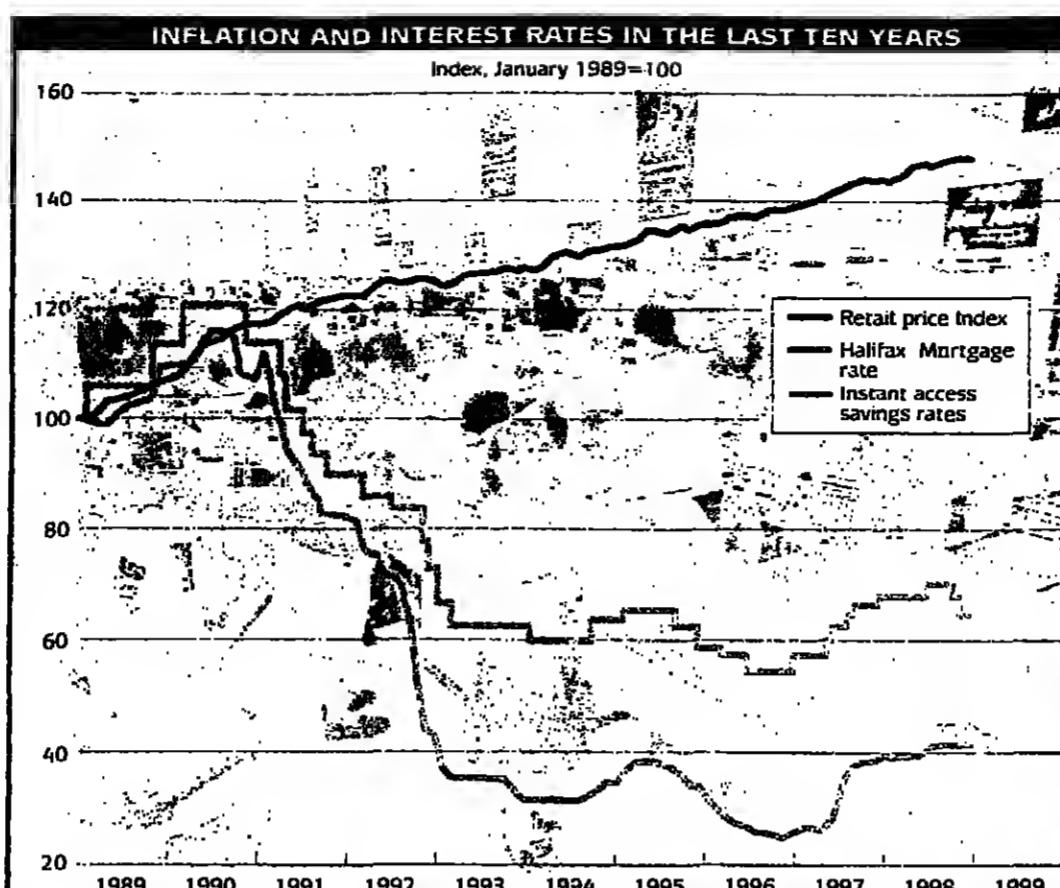
Compared to other countries in Europe, which have long enjoyed low-cost, long-term, fixed-rate mortgages, and the US, where securitisation of home loans is widespread, the price we pay for our home loans remains, in general, extravagantly high, and the system by which we obtain them excessively inflexible.

When you consider that inflation is now firmly entrenched at around 2 per cent per annum, the fact that many home owners are still paying 8 per cent or so for their mortgages is little short of extraordinary. A real (inflation-adjusted) rate of interest of 6 per cent is very high for long-term lending which is fully secured on property values (and that's before the fact that many lenders require you to pay the cost of insuring that such security might not be enough).

In fact, the business of mortgage lending in this country has been so profitable for most of the last 15 years, that it is no surprise that new lenders keep falling over themselves to try and get into the market. It is true that increased competition is belatedly having some impact on the cost of home loans, as anyone who has enjoyed a cashback or cut price mortgage offer in the last three years will testify.

For the first time in many years, canny buyers and homeowners who switch their lenders have recently had the chance to enjoy some terrific mortgage bargains. But because existing borrowers seem content to cross-subsidise the new business their lender is wooing with its cut-price offers, overall profit margins in the business still remain high.

It seems that most existing borrowers are either too lazy or perhaps too diffident, to work out that they should be able to take advantage of these new market conditions to strike a better deal for themselves.



Anyone who opted for a fixed rate mortgage is discovering that they are paying a big premium for the insurance of knowing their repayment obligations in advance. Needless to say, the lenders are doing all they can to lock in those who take advantage of new cheap deals with hefty redemption penal-

ties and similar loyalty devices.

In the days when house prices were soaring, and the government dispensed hefty tax breaks for house purchase, the need to worry about the cost of a mortgage was limited. But now that world has gone, and the scope for consumers to exercise their muscle is much increased. But they still seem reluctant to take

full advantage of the opportunity. It is not the cost of a house, but the cost of the finance, which should top consumers' agendas.

Given the other strange things that have gone on in the mortgage market over the years including the remarkable resilience of the commission-led endowment mortgage,

week, is that consumer pressure is finally starting to assert itself, and will eventually do the job before heavy handed government regulators get involved. Securitising mortgage loans, if it ever happens, would certainly be another welcome step down the path towards a healthy competitive market in mortgages. It suggests that lenders are finally being forced to accept the new reality and do all they can to cut their funding costs.

Theory suggests that a big mortgage lender with access to securitised finance could cut the margin on mortgage lending to 1 per cent or less. This compares with the 1.4 per cent typically required by banks funding their loans in the money markets, and the 2 per cent which lenders traditionally charge for the privilege of helping us buy our homes. Securitisation works in the United States, and if it doesn't come to this country soon, we really should start asking ourselves why.

Ways to raise your interest

Make your money work harder for you. By Iain Morse

HEARD THE ONE about a man who kept £10,000 in his current account? No? You haven't missed much in the way of interest. After deducting tax, charges and inflation, the real value of cash in most current accounts is falling.

If you doubt this, then figure it out for yourself. Put £10,000 into Abbey National's Instant Plus Account, paying monthly interest of just 1 per cent gross. After deducting 20 per cent basic rate income tax, the net annual return on this account would be £20.

The underlying rate of inflation – excluding house prices – fell to 2.5 per cent in August. Apply this over 12 months, add net interest, and the real value of cash would be around £9,830. On these figures, basic rate taxpayers need gross returns of at least 3.1 per cent just to level peg with inflation.

One way to get higher interest is by putting your cash in a "variable term account". Check on whether interest is credited to the account on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis.

As an example, take Bradford & Bingley's Bonus 120 account, which pays annual interest of 7.4 gross, and a lower 7.2 per cent if paying monthly on a deposit of £10,000. There are penalties for early withdrawal.

But Jeremy Peat, chief accountant of the Royal Bank of Scotland warns: "Interest rates could go lower, faster, than has yet been factored in by the markets." If you're relying on interest to supplement income, looking at fixed rate accounts seems a sensible precaution.

Northern Rock has some of the best deals on one-year fixed-rate bonds; £10,000 will lock into a fixed gross rate of 7.05 per cent paid monthly. Non-taxpayers investing this amount receive £58.75 a

month, low rate taxpayers £47 a month or 5.64 per cent oet, and high rate payers, £35.35 a month, or 4.18 per cent net.

But caution is needed. Monthly interest bonds pay less – between 0.2 and 0.5 per cent – than quarterly or annual bonds. No early access to capital is allowed.

Bonds of this kind are available from banks and building societies. Some insurance companies offer "guaranteed income bonds" (GIB's).

The big drawback of GIB's is that they only pay "income" net of basic rate tax. This is

If you're relying on interest to boost income, looking at fixed rates is a wise precaution

not reclaimable even by non-taxpayers. Investing £10,000 for one year, the best oet return comes from GE Financial Assurance, paying 5.16 oet monthly. Over three and four years Hamro Assured offers respective rates of 4.90 and 5.10.

Some local authorities issue fixed-rate term bonds. These are similar to fixed-access bonds, with no early access. Over one year, Torfaen BC comes top, paying 6.25 gross on a six-monthly basis, on deposits of £1,000 or more.

You can also try "moneymarket time deposits". The current best deal comes from Anglo Irish Bankcorp, offering a fixed rate of 6.5 per cent over 12 months on deposits of £50,000 or more. Remember the effect of inflation on your capital. At 2.5 per cent, inflation would reduce the value of £10,000 to just £8,750 over five years.

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Plug those tax leaks now

Ten top tips on tax saving from the people who know how it's done. By Andy Couchman

In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." Benjamin Franklin's famous comment is as true today as it was 200 years ago but, while most of us are happy to pay our taxes, few of us want to pay any more than we have to.

The essence to saving tax is, for most people, a question of concentrating on simple, well-known ideas, rather than setting up complex tax mitigation schemes. Not everyone wants to, or can afford to, set up offshore trusts. Indeed, it is important not to get involved in tax evasion - which is illegal - and even tax avoidance, using legal tax loopholes to minimise tax, is distasteful to many.

To find out how best to minimise tax, we consulted two firms of accountants and two guides to taxation. Here, then, are *The Independent's* top 10 tax tips:

■ A good starting point from the *Allied Dunbar Tax Handbook*, edited by Tony Foreman and sponsored by accountants Pannell Kerr Forster, is to take your tax affairs seriously, to read up about self-assessment, and not to be fooled by "G&T tax advice". Just because a mate down the pub claims to pay no tax does not mean that they do not, or that their activities are legal. Make sure that you keep good records. That will also make it easier for you or your accountant to sort out your tax affairs.

■ In many families, one spouse pays less tax than the other does. So, if your spouse pays less tax than you do, consider transferring assets to them. This works especially well if one partner is a higher rate taxpayer and currently holds most or all of the family's investments. Janice Payne of London-based Kings Mill Tax Practice, says this can help avoid paying higher rate tax on investment income. The gift has to be without reservation - if your partner decides to cash the money and go on a spree they are free to do so.

■ People whose homes are big enough can receive tax-free rent up to £4,250 under the Rent a Room rules. The home needs to be your main or only residence at some time during the letting and the room must be furnished says William Hinton, of chartered accountants William Hinton & Partners in Stow-on-the-Wold.

■ Another idea from William Hinton is to take advantage of available tax breaks. Most people are familiar with PEPs and with Tessas, but a



Get organised to sort out your tax affairs, and stop your money going down the drain

Tony Buckingham

erates more profits than you want to spend, consider incorporating it, writes tax consultant Sonia Gable in her book *Planning for Capital Gains Tax*. There are two reasons to do so: first, a limited company is likely to pay a lower rate of tax than you do, and second, there are CGT advantages available through companies that individuals do not have.

■ For the self-employed, look at investing as much as you can into a personal pension. You can start getting your hands on pensions income from age 50 - lower if you are in a profession such as sport or show business, says Janice Payne.

■ Another idea from William Hinton is to take advantage of available tax breaks. Most people are familiar with PEPs and with Tessas, but a

useful tip, if the recession bites and your business is VAT-registered, is that if you can write off bad debts after six months you can reclaim the VAT paid.

■ If you think that you are self-employed, make sure that the Revenue does too, advises the *Tax Handbook*.

Self-employed workers can offset more expenses against tax than employees. The rules are especially complex if you work "onsite" for someone else, so you should seek professional advice.

■ If you have held assets for less than 10 years, consider delaying realising gains where the qualifying holding period is just short of a full number of years, says Sonia Gable. That is because the new taper relief for Capital Gains Tax, works on

how many full years you have held the asset for.

■ Here's a simple way to save at least £100 - make sure that you have submitted your self assessment tax return and paid your tax for 1997/98 by 31 January.

■ Do not throw anything away. The *Tax Handbook* advises that the Revenue's policy is to "process now, check later". It reserves the right to open an enquiry into your 1997/98 tax return until 1 February 2000 - and it does not have to give a justification for doing so. How stroog would your case be if you had thrown away your tax records before then?

If your tax affairs are at all complex, it will probably pay you to employ an accountant or tax adviser - but make sure that they employ properly qualified staff, and specialise in the tax affairs of people like you. If you want to do it yourself, a good tax guide is a must. *The Allied Dunbar Tax Handbook* is one of the best established, while *Taxbriefs' Planning for Capital Gains Tax* is a new guide to this complex tax.

But do not leave it too long to get your tax affairs in order. The time to plan and to set aside the money to pay your tax bill is now.

The Kings Mill Tax Practice, 9181 649 5889; William Hinton & Partners, 01451 831 130; *Allied Dunbar Tax Handbook*, price £25.99 from booksellers; *Planning for Capital Gains Tax*, price £47 from *Taxbriefs* on 0171 250 0967

Red faces at the Revenue

Some 800,000 incorrect tax demands have gone out. By Andrew Verity

AS TOMORROW'S deadline looms for getting tax returns to the tax office, a spate of horror stories is emerging about an Inland Revenue mistake that led hundreds of thousands of people to be sent the wrong tax demands.

The Revenue has admitted that more than 800,000 taxpayers were issued with incorrect tax demands on 27 December. The demands, also known as assessments, appeared to require them to pay double the amount they owed by 31 January.

Ironically, the blunder was caused by an attempt to make it clearer to taxpayers how much they owed. The tax assessments set out the payments owing for the year 1998/99, rather than breaking them up into instalments. But in doing so, they failed to make it obvious that only half the amount was due for payment by the end of January.

The Revenue sent out a letter of apology soon after the blunder came to light, telling taxpayers that the assessment sent out in December might have been calculated by the wrong formula. The farce was compounded when the Revenue was forced to issue further letters of apology, making it clear that only some - not all - of the assessments were wrong.

Tax agents are demanding that the Inland Revenue show flexibility about the demands and promises not to charge interest to taxpayers affected by the mistake.

The blunder is the latest in a series caused by the Revenue's new self-assessment system. At the same time a year ago, the Revenue's spanking new computer system issued upwards of 4 million tax demands. Tens of thousands of them incorporated a rather embarrassing mistake: the system had mistaken debits for credits - and vice versa.

The assessments showed refunds due to people who owed tax, and charged people who were owed refunds.

The public's experience of the new system has exposed further absurdities.

Andrea Craig, a 33-year-old health care consultant from north London, was particularly conscientious when she discovered a Revenue error. Last year her office, London Provincial 10 in Gateshead, overlooked a line in her tax return specifying share options due to her. They issued her with a refund.

Knowing that she owed tax, Andrea contacted London Provincial 10, who admitted their error and said they would send her an amended tax demand before 31 January (so that she could pay in time).

Unfortunately, Andrea became fully self-employed shortly afterwards and her papers were sent to a King's Cross office. No amended demand was forthcoming.

"The next thing I knew was in February, when they sent me a new assessment saying I owed them money plus interest because I was overdue," she says. She filled out an appeal form, only to find herself called up by a Revenue official telling her she had "no reasonable grounds for appeal". Only months later, after writing to three senior managers and spending hours on the phone, did Andrea get an apology.

Last week we published an article on tax returns by Sara Williams along with extracts from her book, the *Lloyd's Bank Tax Guide*. The guide is available to readers of *The Independent* at a reduced price of £5 inc p&p (normal retail price, £7.99). To take advantage of the offer, please send a cheque for £5 to *Independent Reader Offer Profile Books*, 58a Hatton Garden, London EC1N 8LX.

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*Source: Standard & Poor's Municipal 4.11.91-1.10.98. Investment offer to bid prices gross income re-invested. 535 funds to survey. **Source: Standard & Poor's Fund Research 1 October 1998. The same investment would have provided a range and gross rate of 12.8%. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future. The value of units and the income from them can go down as well as up and is not guaranteed. The rate of the currency conversion will affect the value of any overseas investments to go down as well as up. The tax position of PEPs will change in April 1999. For your protection calls may be recorded or monitored. Issued by Scottish Widows Investment Management Limited. Regulated by the Personal Investments Authority and DIFCIA.

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PAGE 11

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faces at
Revenue
income tax demands
By Andrew Verity

Flexible mortgages are a hit with punters and a miss for old-style lenders. By Teresa Hunter

Let's all be flexible

The traditional 25-year mortgage has been an endangered species for some time, following radical changes to our lifestyles. But its death-knell was finally sounded this week when a new entrant to the mortgage market pulled the rug out from under the rest of the industry.

In just three weeks, Standard Life's Freestyle Flexibility mortgage has attracted applications worth £500m, nearly half the entire monthly lending of all banks and building societies put together, exploding a few key concepts that the major lenders have resolutely clung to.

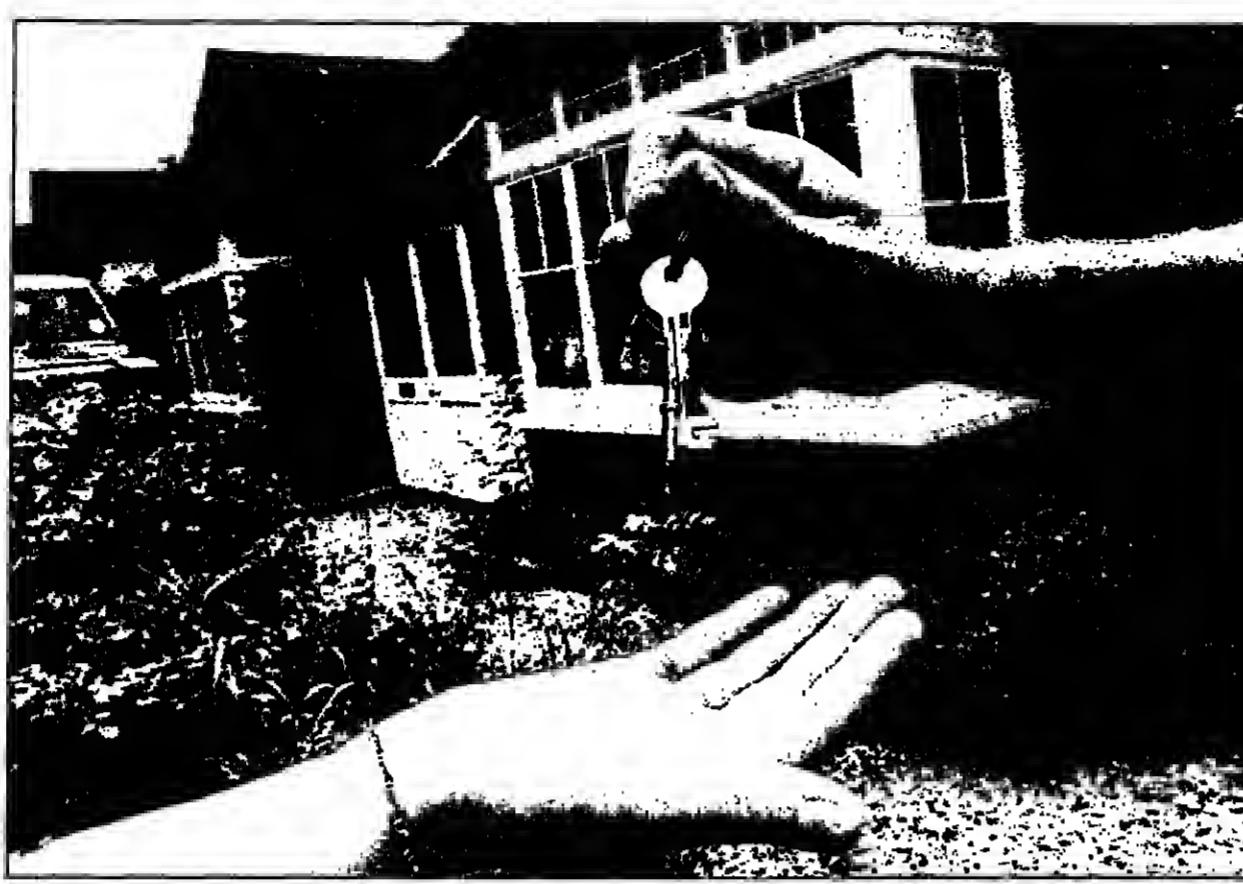
The first of these concerns their rigid defence of the way interest is calculated, in the face of consumers' complaints that they are being systematically overcharged. The second is that the mortgages they offer meet customers' needs for flexibility. If only a fraction of the applications being processed by Standard Life mature into loans, the mortgage market will never be the same again.

Its impact was underlined yesterday when Britain's two biggest mortgage lenders, the Halifax and the Abbey National, both disclosed that they are actively developing a similar product, though the Halifax has some reservations. The Nationwide is also examining the scope for further flexibility.

The Woolwich, the first of Britain's mainstream lenders to launch a flexible mortgage, revealed that this was now the first choice of nearly half of all borrowers. The Alliance & Leicester, which recently launched its own flexible mortgage, said it had been "overwhelmed" by the response.

The reason these mortgages are popular is because they allow borrowers to overpay in the good times, and underpay, or not pay at all, when life gets tough, without having to crawl on bended knee to their bank manager. Insecurity at work, and the increase in contract and casual employment, make this a vital facility for many.

But for really effective flex-



New flexible mortgage deals could save you thousands and be tailored to your requirements John Lawrence

bility, interest on these mortgages has to be calculated quite differently from the current method. This has serious implications for computer systems and the finance industry.

Building societies and traditional mortgage lenders have always worked out interest annually. At the beginning of the year they calculate your monthly repayments and your balance remains unchanged until the end of the year, when they do the sums again.

THE BEST BUYS

flexible mortgages	rate per cent
Standard Life	4.55
Alliance & Leicester	6.76
Woolwich	7.10
2 year fixed	5.99
Remortgage only	4.99
2 year cap	5.65
3 year cap	5.99
4 year cap	5.99

However, when interest is calculated monthly or daily rather than annual interest, this has serious implications for computer systems and the finance industry.

Building societies and traditional mortgage lenders have always worked out interest annually. At the beginning of the year they calculate your monthly repayments and your balance remains unchanged until the end of the year, when they do the sums again.

"I have no doubt that, over time, every mortgage product in the mortgage portfolio will offer this potential, but in the short term there are chronic computer system problems."

The mortgage brokers John Charcol are less sanguine about lenders' motives for sticking with annual interest. A spokesman, Ian Darby, says: "The thing that's holding them

before all mortgages offer flexibility and the choice of monthly rather than annual interest. He says: "Every lender in the country is looking at launching a flexible mortgage, because we know that's what customers want. The world has changed. People no longer wish to make the same repayment over 25 years. They want to pay off more in the good times and less in the bad times, and for their overall interest bill to be cut accordingly - and that means monthly interest."

In his view, it was the Woolwich initiative that broke the mould: "For the first time you had a mainstream lender offering a competitive range of mortgage options with the flexibility to over- and underpay, and interest charged monthly."

But the Woolwich points out that while monthly charging can work in a customer's favour when he is repaying early, it has the opposite impact for borrowers with difficulties. A spokesman says: "Don't forget, if interest is adjusted monthly or daily, the arrears will climb faster as well."

LOOSE CHANGE

THE PRICE of traded endowment policies has fallen because of fears of reduced annual and terminal bonuses, but the policies are now cheaper and less volatile than shares, say TEP market-makers Policy Portfolio. (0181-343-4567 for a stock list). Average annualised growth of policies sold last year was 10.35 per cent.

FAMILY MEDIATION is a cheaper option for divorcing couples according to the UK College of Family Mediators, established in 1996. Mediators can be found in the phone book or by calling 0171-391-9162. PROPERTY OWNERS on the Net looking for a cheaper

remortgage can access www.moneyxtra.com 24 hours a day for a free search facility.

PAUL YOUNG, the independent financial adviser, is offering a free guide to Venture Capital Trusts aimed mainly at individuals with CGT to pay. Call 0500-701707 during office hours.

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SHOPPING

THE INDEPENDENT
Saturday 30 January 1999

A London-based duo are transforming window blinds with their innovative use of textiles. By Dominic Lutyens

Update your windows with designs worth their salt



Wake up to the sight of a blind from Salt and you might easily think you were still dreaming. It's not hard to see why:

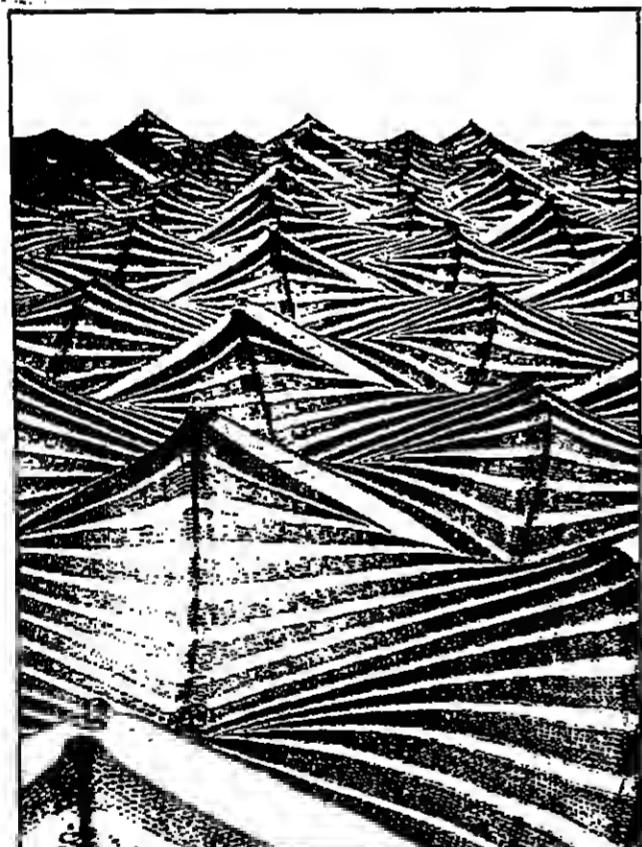
at the half-light, the company's organic-looking three-dimensional creations could conjure up surreal visions of, say, a rock-smothered with barnacles, dinosaur vertebrae or tetrahedra. Blinds hazily reminiscent of trips to the Natural History Museum might not be everyone's dream design discovery, but don't be put off.

Made of knitted and woven textiles in the subtlety of hand-dyed shades, the blinds are as beautiful as they are arresting. "Blinds are a product no one had really looked at for years, so it seemed a logical area to go into," says Karina Holmes, who, with June Swindell, set up Salt in 1996. "We had a gut feeling that there was room for our ideas. And there has: we discovered that people wanted different, interesting blinds."

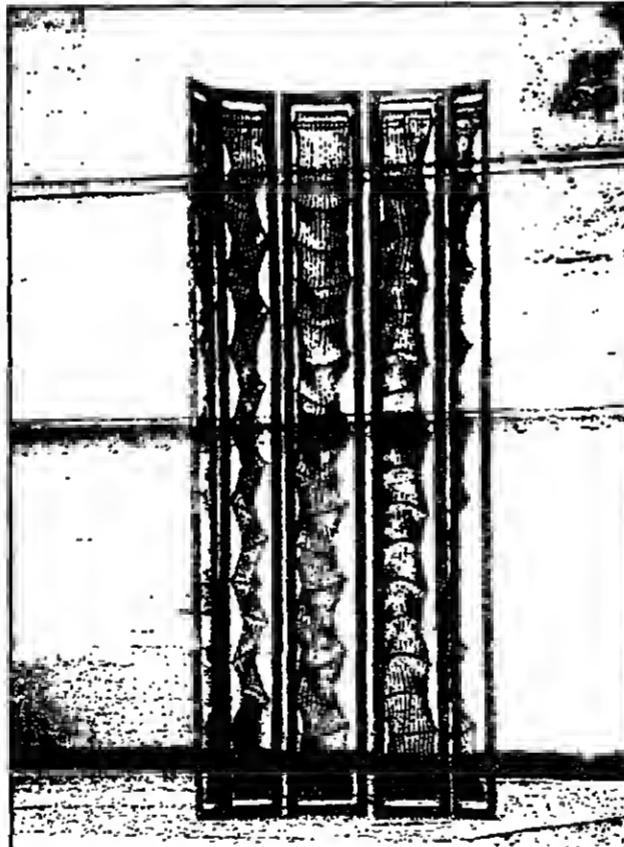
"Contemporary design had been about furniture for the past 10 years," continues Holmes. "But we've entered a new area, which we call 'working textiles' because our blinds are not only functional but also decorative, thanks to their textures and forms. The funny thing is, big furniture designers are now using highly textured fabrics: bouclé and unusual yarns. Even so, gents still don't know what bracket to put us in because we're not textile designers in the traditional sense."

Not that the Salt duo - who also make screens - have always relied on agents' help. Holmes, who has an MA in knitted textiles from the Royal College of Art, and Swindell, with an MA in woven textiles from Nottingham Polytechnic, bonded while working at a "loathsome, unprofessional" homeware company. Their experience there - "we learnt how not to do things" - and a realisation that they had a "common interest in light and transparency", galvanised them to apply successfully for a Sainsbury's scholarship.

Thanks to this, they were able to set up studio at London's Oxo Tower Wharf. The press quickly picked up on us - *Elle*



In the half-light, these delicate, surreal-looking creations (top) are as beautiful as they are arresting. On closer inspection (above), it is not difficult to see that modern architecture is the inspiration for Salt's extraordinary and sculptural vertical blind systems, made from knitted textiles.



are curiously low-tech. In the pipeline is a range of "warm blinds" - roller blinds in a thick, tribal-looking felt, made by artisans in Central Asia. As with all Salt's designs, these come in super-subtle, tone-on-tone browns and beiges. "Our blinds have very busy textures," says Swindell. "If they were colourful, there'd be too much going on."

The blinds can also be made to measure, in which case Holmes and Swindell like to visit their clients to decide on what would best suit their space. "It's like buying a wedding dress, not in a tawdry sense, but in that the customer is involved in how their blind will look," says Holmes. "We ask for 50 per cent of the cost upfront, so clients need to feel confident with what we're doing," adds Swindell.

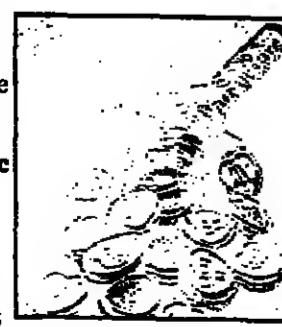
The clients' involvement doesn't stop there, however. Many of the blinds are fashionably modular, too. "Components can be detached or added to alter the blind's look," says Holmes. The screens, meanwhile, were conceived with open-plan living in mind - they can be moved about to change the layout of a room. "Many of our customers," says Holmes, "live in loft conversions. Some people still value traditional interiors because they're associated with wealth, but there's a new group of people - and interior designers - interested in contemporary design."

Yet your average interior designer still has some catching up to do on the modern design front, believes Swindell. "We thought the bulk of our clientele would be interior designers or decorators, but it's actually our customers who put them in touch with us. Old-school decorators still source stuff from the chintz Chelsea Harbour end of the market, but they're having to change to meet different tastes."

By the sound of it, then, Salt isn't going down a blind alley. The company's designs might look unsettlingly surreal, but they're nothing if not directional. Frou-frou Austrian blinds or, for that matter, standard roller blinds - your days could well be numbered.

Salt products are available at Harrods (0171-730 1234) or contact the company direct on 0171-593 0007

GOOD THING



STILL waiting for a call? Give the reluctant Romeo - or Juliet - a chic shove in the right direction with a solid silver Loveheart. It comes either with the usual "Loveheart" messages or more modern greetings: "fax me", "e-mail me", etc., and costs £25 from Judy Wiseman (0181-343 2453). For £1 extra, get your phone or fax number or e-mail address engraved on the back.

MAD THING



CHEESE AND romance don't always make an obvious coupling but, if you want to impress on Valentine's Day, be prepared to satisfy starving suitors by filling your fridge with little heart-shaped cranberry and Wensleydale cheeses. They come suitably coated in red wax and cost 99p each from Asda (enquiries 0500 100055). MURIEL DESAULLES

SOME COMPANIES know exactly how to market themselves to best advantage and Loud and Clear is just one of those. Not only is the catalogue full of bright and funky presents, it even comes with a sheet of dazzling yellow and white stickers to fill up your diary with reminders of not-to-be-forgotten occasions ("hen night", "dinner", "football", "hot date" and, of course, "drinks"). Even better: each of the little stickers comes with the Loud and Clear phone number written across the bottom, just in case you should need a little



gift for that special occasion. Neat idea, eh?

The gifts in question are just as much fun - swirly lollipops, flamboyant silken flowers, neon-coloured toy guns and single slices of icing-topped cake, to name just a few. All are sent vacuum-packed in plastic with the appropriate, quirky gift tag attached.

The idea is that the gift doubles up as the greeting, so you select the item you want to send (from £4.95 for a pair of bright red lips or a slice of lightly grilled toast (whatever greeting that says), to £9.95 for the fluffy "mini-nubile" cushion) and then choose the tag to match (remembering to specify your message), before calling 0171-247 4232 to make your order by credit card.

SHOPTALK

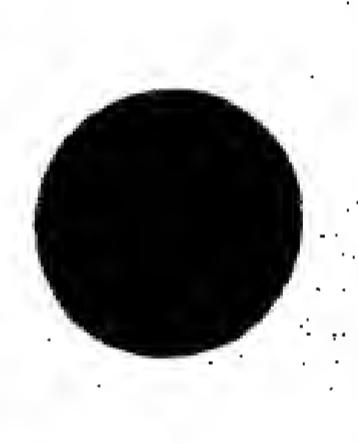
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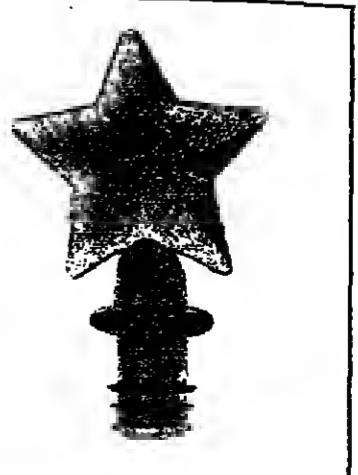
Manzoni Pietro wooden stopper, £4.45, David Mellor (0171-730 4259)



Sterling silver stopper, £48, Links of London (01483 450155 for nearest stockist)



Plastic fish stopper, £4.25, Graham & Green (0171-727 4594)



Plastic star stopper, £1.99, Tesco (enquiries 0800 505555)

I WANT TO OWN A...
PLAYBOY'S BAR KIT

How to spend a happy hour

Drinking is a bit like sex. Having sampled your way round the entire bar and made sure that you have experienced the most exotic flavours around, you usually narrow down your choice to a couple of reassuringly predictable and satisfying tipplers that you can get at home every night without too much effort.

But it doesn't have to be this way. In the Sixties, when everyone was swinging, behind rayon curtains across the land people were concocting martinis and gin slings at their cocktail bars (remember Dustin Hoffman in *The Graduate*? That could have been your dad).

I was introduced to this alternative way of life when I picked up a white elephant of a cocktail bar at a jumble sale a decade ago. In truth, though, it never really fitted in anywhere. It was never quite kitsch enough to be cool, weighed a ton, and required half an acre to unfurl its hinged Formica flap top into a glorious semicircle. Its stitched-padding fascia, meanwhile, was stained and fag burnt and its golden braiding had long since become sharp as razor-wire.

Yet at least the thing wasn't as naff as some of its peers, several of which were designed to emulate the prows of classic ocean liners. And, at four quid, it remains my personal undisputed jumble-sale bargain of the century - a welcoming host to pink plastic, coconut-tree swizzle-sticks and plywood tooth picks, a chrome cocktail shaker, stainless steel strainers, and spirits. An awful lot of spirits.

The beloved cocktail bar survived tower-block-rocking parties in Tower Hamlets, when the only other item of front-room furniture - a tea table - was hurled 15 storeys to its sorry destruction. It was the centre-piece of a riotous cocktail party held in a rented West Hampstead bouse, and illuminated a kitchen in Clapton before, finally, the elegant curved glass in its upper deck was shattered in Stoke Newington by my offspring.

Although the memory of its mellow golden glow has started to wane, the taste of a Slow Comfortable Screw is harder to exorcise. So if, like

me, on occasion you hanker after the life of F Scott Fitzgerald and would like to get a Crazy Horse down your neck (or for the uninitiated: 20ml Scotch, 10ml strawberry liqueur, 10ml crème de banane, shaken and strained into a champagne flute, topped up with 60ml of Bally and garnished with orange and mint), then you will need to invest in the following accessories (cocktail bar optional):

BLENDER/JUICE EXTRACTOR

As discussed in a healthier column on juicing earlier this month, nothing approaches the combined style and versatility of Waring's Professional Blender (£149.95) and Extractor (£239, 0181-232 8171, for stockists), although for kitsch bar-top credibility, Hamilton Beach's bulbous chrome dome Drinks Master (£59.95, Liberty, 0171-734 1234) takes the silver medal.

BEER BOTTLE OPENER

Name: Alessi Diabolix
Price: £7.95
Stockist: 01920 444272

Description: The Diabolix has a smooth, curved plastic hand-grip topped with impish devil's horns. Designed by Biagio Cisotti in 1994, the opener comes in a handful of colours, but the most appropriate is bright red.

Style: ★★★★

Anything else worth considering? If you always spend half-an-hour stumbling around the kitchen looking for something to crack open a beer, then you'll be requiring Culinaire's Crab (£2.95, 0181-868 4353), a bright orange crustacean with a bridge magnet welded to its underbelly.

ICE BOX

Name: The Planet Earth acrylic cube
Price: £99
Stockist: John Lewis (0171-629 7711 for nearest store)

Description: For novelty value - and let's face it, the cocktail-making arena is one of the few places where you can go kitsch crazy and still be regarded as having reasonable taste - this clear cube, hollowed out to resemble a mould of our planet, is the epitome of cool

Style: ★★★★

Anything else worth considering? Alessi, which is always on hand with a few funky accessories, does a reasonable stainless-steel egg complete with reindeer horns (£25). The plastic top-hat ice bucket that you can get, though, are way beyond ironic.

ICE-CRUSHER

Name: BarWare Ice-Crusher
Price: £45
Stockist: House of Fraser (0171-963 2238 for enquiries)

Description: My what sharp teeth you have, Grandma. This chrome-plated machine has got a big bite for one so small.

Style: ★★★★

Anything else worth considering? If you've got a decent blender, then this is one accessory that you can probably live without.

Name: The Bullet by Metrokane
Price: £29.75
Stockist: John Lewis (0171-629 7711 for nearest store)

Description: An Art-Deco-inspired, bullet cartridge shaker with a 28oz capacity and an internal strainer, perfect for making those James Bond Martinis.

Style: ★★★★

Anything else worth considering? Several manufacturers make the more traditional three-piece, stainless-steel shakers, or you can go for the more simplistic "Boston" shaker, which doesn't include a strainer.

SODA SYPHON

Name: Isi Soda Siphon
Price: £39
Stockist: John Lewis (0171-629 7711 for nearest store)

Description: Despite being a pretty redundant item of hardware, the soda siphon remains a must for every well-stocked bar for its whimsical sense of style, its potential as a lifesaver in emergencies involving smouldering cocktail dresses and for all-round high jinks. They often come in gaudy golds and ruby red casing, but Isi's soda siphon has a restrained black and chrome top and a tasteful mesh casing.

Style: ★★★★

Anything else worth considering? Well, if money is no object you can quickly rack up a Third World debt on silver-plated bar furnishings, such as a 50ml, £105 measure, from Selfridges (0171-629 1234).

BAR ACCESSORIES

Name: Bar Atlantic eight-piece stainless steel bar set
Price: £40
Stockist: Debenhams (0171-408 4444 for stockists)

Description: The tiny bucket may be more appropriate for holding cashew nuts than a wine bottle and

ice (as optimistically illustrated on the box), but otherwise this set comprises the surgeon's tools of the budding barman: clip-on cocktail strainer, bottle-opener, stirrer, jigger knife, ice-cube tongs and double-sided measures for 25ml and 50ml shots respectively.

Style: ★★★★

Anything else worth considering? Well, if money is no object you can quickly rack up a Third World debt on silver-plated bar furnishings, such as a 50ml, £105 measure, from Selfridges (0171-629 1234).

FINISHING TOUCHES

To make sure you're more of a shaker-maker than Tom Cruise in the cocktail department, ensure that the following items are also readily to hand: chopping-board, citrus peeler, paring-knife, a grater, long-handled

metal bar spoons, swizzle sticks, straws, cocktail sticks, a muddler (for crushing sugar and bruising mint leaves), suitable glasses (avoid ones etched with functional words such as "juice" and "martini"), a jug, Irish coffee spoons, and an ice cube tray. A decent selection of spirits and mixers (Angostura bitters and grenadine are essential) is also advisable, plus a little cheat book that can be discreetly tucked away. The notebook-sized *How to Make Over 200 Cocktails* (50p, Claremont Books) is perfect. Finally, don't forget the finishing touch without which no cocktail party guest can recognise their own ridiculousness - the paper umbrella (£1.69, Tesco, 0800 505555 for enquiries).

SHAWN PHILLIPS

The writer is deputy editor of ZM

CHECK IT OUT

HI-TECH ALTERNATIVES



The Astropath, left, and moon diary, above

There must be something about the air of roach in a new millennium that makes people want to go all technological. Whatever the reason, even "alternative" aspects of contemporary life are repackaging themselves into hi-tech phenomena. If you're seeking peace of body mind or soul, there's almost certainly a futuristic gadget out there to help you achieve it.

If you're searching for something to soothe the soul, forget the odd wind chime here and there, these days even feng shui has gone digital. The latest feng shui website offers an interactive service that will let even troubled travellers bring feng shui to their hotel room. Simply connect up to the site, pay by credit card (£1 per room) and sit back while Kate Lord and Huw Griffiths, the online feng shui consultants, assess your surroundings.

Patience will be necessary, however. The site is still in its teething stage so there's a long wait while all the images load up - the suggestion is that you scroll through the instructions in the pop-up window to pass the time - and my computer put down a very bad chi foot by refusing to let me access the service.

If your computer is more generous, start at the beginning and read the consultants' biographies, catch up on the latest celebrity visitors and browse the example room reports before going to "start". After tapping in the direction of the room's door, you use the computer to "draw" a

picture of the room and then, after paying the necessary cash, wait for the report to materialise.

Once you've taken the site's advice and got your living space sorted, move onto the mind with an Astropath. For those who secretly scan the papers for the horoscopes, £19.99 will buy a whole year's worth of detailed daily astrological predictions.

These nattily named machines look reassuringly like the calculator included in its range of functions (so no one need know what you're up to) and are available for each sign of the zodiac.

To find out your horoscope on any day in 1999, click on the 'horoscope' button punch in the date and scroll across the battery-powered LCD screen. Compiled by a team of professional astrologers - including Nicholas Campion, the president of the Astrological Association of Great Britain - the horoscopes are enticingly frivolous but, as with all things astrological, whether you decide that they are accurate or not largely comes down to your own beliefs.

Sceptics will be put off by the detail (claims that I wrote poetry yesterday did not materialise), but it's fun, would make a great present and has all kinds of useful functions. The Astropath helps you choose numbers for the National Lottery, houses the afore-mentioned calculator and an alarm clock and even works out emotional and professional compatibility with other people for each day of the year. Blimey! The latest scheduling accessory is also related to astrology although

it's not an astrological calendar. The Greta Kahn Moon Diary (£5.95 plus 45p P&P) is based around "moon knowledge". The diary laments the fact that "the best time to sow seed or to cut wood ceased to be a theme in the lives of bankers and office workers", but it aims to change all that and uses the same principles as are used in agriculture to help organise the hip urbanite's hairdressing year.

Strange, but apparently it's true. The different planetary positions and

stellar constellations throughout the lunar cycle transmit "cosmic energies" which affect us physically. The effect of all this is that a waxing moon is the ideal time for cutting and nourishing hair treatments whereas a waning moon is a better time for cleansing. Certain days are good for colouring and anti-dandruff treatments and other days - "water" days - are bad for pretty much everything except structure-improving treatments.

Before you so much as turn a

page in the diary, you must have your hair analysed then, once you've planned its type, you can consult the diary to find out what you should or shouldn't do to your hair. Each day of the year has an entry listing whether it's a good or bad day for cutting, perming or pretty much everything to do with your hair as well as space to scribble down all the necessary hair appointments.

In case you're wondering today is a good day for cutting your hair if you want to increase volume and

encourage rapid growth. Hair care treatments will be effective and oxidising and bleaching processes will work well... it doesn't say anything about washing, but I think I'll risk it.

RHIANNO BATTEN
The feng shui website is at www.online-fengshui.com; for Astropath stockists, call 0171-229 9394; copies of 'The Moon And Your Hair' can be ordered from www.gretakahn.com or by phone on 0181-886 7720

PROPERTY

11

They beat a path to your door

Would you back the right to roam if you had a public footpath outside your sitting room? By Penny Jackson

Not every one would relish the thought of being peered at over the garden hedge while enjoying an al fresco summer lunch. A home in the country tends to mean peace, quiet and above all privacy, shielded from the public gaze by acres of land.

But James Laing is used to strange faces popping up. His Berkshire farmhouse is surrounded on three sides by either a footpath or

'Ramblers must understand that what is just grass to them is a crop to us'

bridle path. Walkers and riders are as much part of his landscape as the animals, and he has few complaints. "They almost always stop and say good morning, and ask what we are doing. They have a genuine interest in the countryside, in every respect, it is an enjoyable experience."

Controversy over the right to roam makes it easy to believe that landowner and public are locked in battle over the use of the countryside. Even though it is an issue affecting mainly large estates with open land,

it does make people think twice before buying a property with a public right of access. Some of the footpaths can run close to the main building. In James Laing's case, very close.

"When you get to the top of our driveway, the path comes to within 40 yards of the house, which you can see straight ahead. Then you can effectively walk right through the farm buildings and see the house from the other side over the garden hedge. The land is open there, with no gates or stiles. Our main worry is security. We have had three burglaries since we moved here eight years ago."

As the owner of 80 acres of land, Laing, who works for estate agents Strutt & Parker, who are strongly associated with the country, is in no doubt that landowners should be more welcoming, not less. "If we create proper parking areas at the start of footpaths, there will less reason for people to stray on to grazing land. How often do you see one start on a narrow verge in a bramble hedge and with nowhere to park for half a mile? Then walkers roam illegally across fields until they pick up the route path. Worse still, they are likely to block up gateways with their cars."

The problem is not with ramblers but with motorcyclists. If a group of kids come along whistling and singing, that's great. What I do object to is when a motorbike, which shouldn't be there, spoils our privacy. When they race around on a Sunday

afternoon without silencers, the noise is like holding a chain saw. They can be physically and verbally abusive. One took a swing at a guest last summer. By the time the police arrive, they've disappeared."

Nor is it just bikes. Drivers of four-wheel vehicles are equally tempted by the open land. This kind of scenario is why some buyers won't contemplate buying a place where the public have access. As they see it, the public has lost sight of the fact that these paths originally existed for a

few villagers to get to work or nip to the pub. Their fear is of numbers and confronting the badly behaved.

At the Exeter office of Knight Frank, Richard Addington is used to buyers from the south-east throwing up their hands in horror: "I try to explain that in Devon we have 3,500 miles of footpaths and, apart from the coastal paths, they are not used much. There isn't the same pressure on them as in the south-east. Local people are more relaxed about it."

Last summer he sold two farm-

bouses on the coast, both with a couple of cottages and 25 acres. The one that was very private sold for more than £500,000, while the other with a footpath that led quite close to the house, sold under half a million.

"There was a difference of about 15 per cent. The footpath was definitely a large factor, because anything that close to the sea would normally get a good price."

It is not unknown to lose a sale altogether. In Knight Frank's Guildford office, Nigel Mitchell says that the

saleability of such properties decreases, even in areas such as Hazelwood. "It's a particular problem where old farm cottages have been converted into a house. One, sitting in the middle of 30 acres, had a footpath running past the sitting room window." At the moment, he has a cottage for sale in three quarters of an acre with a private right of way across it. "If it was a public footpath, it would be far more of a problem."

Some owners enjoy the prospect of running into the public; some of

them are farmers. Injured cattle or sheep stuck on their backs have been rescued after walkers have discovered them en route. "They must understand that what is grass to them, is a crop to us," says one. "And stick to the footpaths."

Walking is the only activity allowed since the prosecution earlier this century of an anti-hunt demonstrator. He stood on the footpath waving his umbrella and was found guilty of doing something other than walking. You have been warned.



It's always nice to meet new people – as long as they behave responsibly and respect residents' right to a bit of privacy

John Voos

Can Carol Vorderman really help you sell your home?

As the TV schedules fill up with property programming, Ginetta Vedrickis looks at the makeover phenomenon

SOME VENDORS go to extreme lengths. Inviting Carol Smillie or even Carol Vorderman to give your home a quick makeover might be going a little far but could it help you sell?

Changing Rooms famously uses staple guns, MDF and Handy Andy to transform suburban domesticity into, if Laurence Llewellyn-Bowen has a say, something more closely resembling a bordello. Its ITV rival, Better Homes, features Carol Vordermann overseeing sledgehammers and wrecking balls with the emphasis on serious structural change as two families compete to see who can add most value to their properties.

Cynics might assume the bordello look hinders sales but some estate agents are keen to try unconventional ways of achieving commissions. Paul Curtis of Roy Brooks' Dulwich branch appeared in CS's House Doctor, in which "real estate stylist" Ann Maurice advises vendors how to improve their properties' appearance.

You've got to look at your house as others do, which is hard if you've lived there some time'

Paul Curtis nominated two properties on his books which had not sold and viewers saw prospective buyers give opinions before and after Ann's makeover. Did the programme attract buyers? "We didn't sell either of them," says Paul who still credits the improvements of one "appalling" house. "Basically it was heaped with underwear and what the cameras couldn't capture was the smell."

After Ann Maurice fearlessly advised the vendor to remove the clutter, including the surface of undergarments, the property looked (and must have smelled) fresher – so why didn't Paul sell it? "We had an intelligent buyer but the vendor got greedy and sold through another agent for £10,000 more."

In contrast, Paul's other property was a beautiful roof-terrace flat which proved surprisingly difficult to sell: "It's a lovely flat but the programme couldn't change the fact that it's on a main road," says Paul who firmly believes that House Doctor, unlike programmes featuring structural changes, reminds vendors of the



Terrie Towell, star – or victim – of BBC's 'Changing Rooms'

obvious advantages of ensuring that their assets always look their best: "It's not necessary to renovate but it's common sense to tidy up and it pays."

Daisy Goodwin, House Doctor's editor, agrees – and takes credit for turning around the infamous "house with underpants": "No one in their right mind would have bought that house but we sold it!" She believes that most properties "given the Ann treatment" sell quicker and for more: "You've got to look at your house as others see it, which is hard if you've lived there for some time. But you wouldn't turn up for an interview

wearing old jeans and trainers and it's the same when selling."

Comparing buying to interviewing, Daisy says that prospective buyers decide within 10 seconds and she calls Ann Maurice's advice brutal but effective: "On TV it's essential not to pull punches." How did recipients respond to brutal criticism? "Some of them were dumbstruck until they saw their homes re-done and then they were convinced."

Daisy believes that Ann's background as an American real-estate agent gives her the edge over her British counterparts: "Agents there

have a professional attitude and must pass exams. Most are mature women with a real sense of what people want."

Here you get spotty 24-year-olds who just have to be able to drive VW Golfs. They are too worried about losing their commissions but I think sellers would prefer agents who say, 'Do this and you can make thirty grand more.'

Daisy admits to a serious distaste for other peoples' belongings and her own three purchases have all been of empty properties. When selling she makes strenuous efforts to erase any trace of human life: "We put fresh flowers out and clear everything away so

it's like a hotel. Trouble is, it looks so good that we don't want to move." She previously worked on Homefront, another makeover programme, but admits that she wouldn't undergo one herself: "Not in a million years. You don't have much control and the stress of TV crews and builders in your home is a nightmare. You can get pushed into doing things you don't want to do." She views House Doctor differently: "All these houses weren't selling and we helped them do it."

Someone who agreed to a TV makeover is Terrie Towell who, with husband Brian, allowed the BBC Changing Rooms team to transform their bedroom while they, with stylist Linda Barker, remade their neighbour's son's room. Though it was originally the neighbour's idea to apply, Terrie enjoyed the experience but says it was easy to be "talked into things". While she calls her pre-makeover bedroom "disgusting" she liked the end results: "It was hard work but I loved everything they did."

On 10 February the nation (well a few million viewers) will be privy to the inside of Terrie's lavender bedroom and, yes, she does cry on screen but puts this down to exhaustion rather than elation. All will be revealed then but the prospect of being recognised in the street is not a worry: "I don't mind if they buy me a drink." She believes her TV makeover will not affect future sales in real terms but will definitely improve saleability: "I don't think it will add pounds on but if it could be a good selling point."

Paul Curtis agrees that properties which have appeared on TV hold added attraction for buyers and, by drawing attention to an area, help push up local prices. This week's tabloid headline "Changing Rooms wrecked my marriage" told the story of Stewart Bush, whose relationship soured following his wife's reaction to the "futuristic silver revamp", forcing him to sell his Sidcup house.

Mr Bush won't be interested but if you're not the shy retiring type Daisy Goodwin is seeking vendors with hard-to-sell properties for House Doctor's spring series. Not everyone need apply: "We rejected one which had been on the market for six years. If you're next to the M4 there are some houses that will never sell."

House Doctor: 0171-436 6064; Roy Brooks: 0181-299 3021; Changing Rooms: Wed 8pm BBC1; Better Homes: Mon 8.30pm ITV

STEPPING STONES ONE WOMAN'S PROPERTY STORY



Jennie Burgen and children

SINCE 1976, stained-glass maker Jennie Burgen has bought three properties. She now lives in a cottage in Wimbledon.

In the late Sixties, Jennie, her husband and a kitten lived in a small bedsit in Putney. The building backed on to a main railway line: "It was so noisy that you had to stop all conversation when a train went by."

Sharing a "grotty" bathroom with three other tenants while eight months pregnant brought the inevitable realisation: "It was time to move on." When her mother-in-law heard about a three-bedroom, three-reception Victorian house for rent in Wimbledon, Jennie went to view it: "It was a dump, with a leaking roof in the back extension, dangerous Thirties wiring and rotting window frames."

Most people would have balked but not Jennie: "We were thrilled, to us it was a palace." Every six months the landlord "repaired" the leaking roof using "bitumen and bits of old carpet", but by 1976, "two babies, much work and a second relationship later", Jennie and her partner bought the house as sitting tenants for £10,000.

Jennie loved the house and its space but balked after a country cottage although "the time was never right". By 1986, the relationship had ended and Jennie sold for £26,000. She bought a smaller place in

nearby Motspur Park for £50,000. This house was also Victorian and over time Jennie carried out much work including restoring the kitchen and stained-glass door which prompted her to take an evening class in stained-glass making. This led to a career – Jennie restored most of this street's doors. But when her children left home the house seemed too large.

Four months ago, she saw a "lovely two-bedroom 1860s cottage" for sale in Merton Park. Jennie sold for £155,000 and bought for £165,000 although local agents Finch & Co. estimate "tip-top" cottages in this conservation area now go for about £190,000.

She may not have made it to the country hut, just 10 minutes from Wimbledon station, lives next to a field and a churchyard.

GINETTE VEDRICKS

Those moves in brief...
1976 – bought three-bedroom Wimbledon house as sitting tenant for £10,000, sold for £26,000.
1986 – bought smaller house in Motspur Park for £50,000, sold for £155,000.
1988 – bought cottage for £165,000, worth £190,000.
If you would like your moves to be featured write to: Nic Cicutta, Stepping Stones, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. £100 will be awarded for the best story.

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The Scottish Parliament is coming. The Scottish Parliament is coming. Unfortunately, Edinburgh property conversations these days often end where they began: with anticipation of the new Parliament at Holyrood, in the city centre.

How much turbulence will it cause in Edinburgh property values? Some local estate agents expect limited movement, in keeping with a city of half a million people. Others anticipate soaring prices, while Colin Strang Steel, a partner at Knight Frank, believes that most of the effects that will happen already have: "I think prices will start to level off now. Most of the demand will soon be satisfied."

Colin Campbell is an army officer, and he has been watching the property market carefully. A single man who is currently flat-hunting, he is concentrating his efforts in central Edinburgh: "I'm looking in New Town, Stockbridge and Comely Bank, and prices are going through the roof. A few months ago, a flat on offer for £79,000 went for £105,000."

Mr Campbell contrasts Edinburgh nightlife with that of London, where evenings can begin in one area and often end up miles away in a completely different part of town. "Here, you walk out of your house, go to one section of town, and stay for the night. Living away from the centre would detract from that."



Leith, once the city's port, is being transformed into a London Docklands-style area

And soaring city-centre prices, he believes, are counter-balanced in that this area will be "more insulated against price falls in future".

Excitement regarding the new Parliament is obscuring the perception of many waterfront refurbishment schemes, that are putting previously unappealing or non-residential sections of town firmly on to the house-buyers' map. The new home of the

royal yacht Britannia, Leith, "was once Edinburgh's port and it had been run down," says solicitor George Clark, chairman of the Edinburgh Solicitors Property Centre (ESPC). "This historic port now has developments similar to London's Docklands, such as bonded warehouses converted into flats, and trendy restaurants, bars and nightlife."

Mr Clark notes that Leith has

already seen big price increases, which are propelling buyers further east along the harbour, to areas such as Portobello and Joppa. "Portobello was a Victorian holiday resort with good housing stock but no scope for Docklands-type development." The entire waterfront is slated for massive redevelopment in the future.

Closer to the city centre, "certain parts of Newington have Victorian vil-

las, but the sections with flats may attract buyers priced out of Marchmont, where two-bedroom flats sell for approximately £100,000," notes Mr Clark. "The same flat in Viewforth is only £70-£80,000, and further out prices in Slateford are even lower."

Mr Clark's take on Parliament? It may stimulate the rental rather than the buyer's market.

ROBERT LIEBMAN

Transport: Edinburgh has an international airport with daily flights to more than 10 major UK and continental destinations. By train, journey times are 4.5 hours to London, 1.5 hours to Newcastle, and 45 minutes to Glasgow.

Lies and damned lies: The Edinburgh Solicitors Property

Centre (ESPC) compiles and distributes average prices and percentage changes for several inner-city areas as well as the suburbs. West Lothian, East Lothian, and Midlothian. City-centre prices increased 23 per cent between 1997 and 1998, and Marchmont and Bruntsfield jumped 18 per cent. Leading all

categories, however, are suburban post-1920 detached villas, which have risen by 26 per cent. The ESPC has been tracking prices for more than 25 years and has yet to see a drop, the average rising from £9,064 in 1973 to £80,000 in 1998.

New developments: When completed this summer, Bryant

Homes' Heriot Square in Roseburn will contain nearly 200 two- and three-bedroom flats (146 already sold), being built in six phases. The 19 on current release are selling for £110,000 to £148,000.

Waterfront Edinburgh: This is the title of a government-private partnership to build nearly 4,000

residential units along the eight-mile waterfront. First for sprucing up are Granton and Muirhouse.

Council tax: Band A is £578, and Band B £1,734.

Estate Agents: ESPC 0131 624 8000; George Clark 0131 550 1001; Knight Frank 0131 225 8171.

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